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THE

OLD PRINTER

AND THE

MODERN PRESS.

By CHARLES KNIGHT.

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"Plus on lit, plus on lira; plus il faut, plus il faudra des livres."
Histoire des Français des divers états.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1854.


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TO

CHARLES DICKENS,

ONE OF THE MOST EARNEST LABOURERS IN THAT POPULAR LITERATURE WHICH ELEVATES A PEOPLE,

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

April 13th, 1854.

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PART I.

THE OLD PRINTER.

THE OLD PRINTER.

CHAPTER I.

The Weald of Kent — Caxton's School-days — French disused — English taught — Variations in English — Books before Printing — Libraries — Transcribers — Books for the Great — Book Trade — No Books for the People — Changes produced by Printing.

In the first book printed in the English language, the subject of which was the 'Histories of Troy,' William Caxton, the translator of the work from the French, in his prologue or preface, says, by way of apology for his simpleness and imperfectness in the French and English languages, "In France was I never, and was born and learned mine English in Kent, in the Weald, where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England." The Weald of Kent is now a fertile district, rich in corn-land and pasture, with [illegible] villages spread over its surface, [illegible] by good roads and a railway running through the heart of it, bringing the scattered towns nearer and closer to each other. But it was not so when William Caxton was born, and learnt his English in the Weald, it was a wild district with a scanty population; its inhabitants had

little intercourse with the towns, the affairs of the busy world went on without their knowledge and assistance, they were more separated from the great body of their countrymen than a settler in Canada or Australia is at the present day. It is easy to understand therefore why they should have spoken a "broad and rude English" at the time of Caxton's boyhood, during the reign of Henry V. and the beginning of that of Henry VI. William Lambarde, who wrote a hundred and fifty years after this period, having published his 'Perambulation of Kent' in 1570, mentions as a common opinion touching this Weald of Kent, "that it was a great while together in manner nothing else but a desert and waste wilderness, not planted with towns or peopled with men as the outsides of the shire were, but stored and stuffed with herds of deer and droves of hogs only;" and he goes on to say that, "although the property of the Weald was at the first belonging to certain known owners, yet it was not then allotted into tenancies." The Weald of Kent came to be taken, he says, "even as men were contented to inhabit it, and by peacemeal to rid it of the wood, and [illegible] it up with the plough." In some lonely [illegible] of this wild district, are we, upon the best [illegible] own words, to fix the birth-place and home of the first English printer.

The father of William Caxton was in a [illegible] bility a proprietor of land. At any rate, he desired to bestow upon his son all the advantages of

education which that age could furnish. The honest printer, many years after his school-days, looks back upon that spring-time of his life with feelings that make us honour the simple worth of his character. In his 'Life of Charles the Great,' printed in 1485, he says, "I have emprised [undertaken] and concluded in myself to reduce [translate] this said book into our English, as all along and plainly ye may read, hear, and see, in this book here following. Beseeching all them that shall find fault in the same to correct and amend it, and also to pardon me of the rude and simple reducing. And though so be there no gay terms, nor subtle nor new eloquence, yet I hope that it shall be understood, and to that intent I have specially reduced it after the simple cunning that God hath lent to me, whereof I humbly and with all my heart thank Him, and also am bounden to pray for my father's and mother's souls, that in my youth set me to school, by which, by the sufferance of God, I get my living I hope truly. And that I may so do and continue, I beseech Him to grant me of His grace; and so to labour and occupy myself virtuously, that I may come out of debt and deadly sin, that after this life I may come to His bliss in heaven." Caxton seems to have had the rare happiness to have had his father about him to a late period of his life. According to a record in the accounts of the churchwardens of the parish church of St. Margaret's, Westminster, in which parish the first

printer carried on his business, it appears that one William Caxton, who is conjectured to have been the father, was buried on the 18th of May, 1480.

Some time before the period of Caxton's boyhood, a great change had taken place in the general system of education in England. In the time of Edward III., about half a century before the period of which we speak, the children in the grammar-schools were not taught English at all. It was the policy of the first Norman kings, long continued by their successors, to get rid of the old English or Saxon language altogether; and to make the people familiar with the Norman French, the language of the conquerors. The new statutes of the realm were written in French; so were the decisions of the judges, and the commentaries on the laws in general. Ralph Higden, in a sort of chronicle which Caxton printed, says, "Children in schools, against the usage and manner of all other nations, be compelled for to leave their own language, and for to construe their lessons and their things in French; and so they have since Normans came first into England. Also gentlemen be taught for to speak French from the time that they rocked in their cradle, and can speak and play with a child's brooch [stick or other toy], and uplandish men [countrymen] will liken themselves to gentlemen, and delight with great business for to speak French, to be told of." John de Trevisa, the translator of Higden's 'Polychronicon,'

writing some forty years later, "This manner was much used before the Great Plague, and is since some deal changed; for Sir John Cornewaile, a master of grammar, changed the teaching in grammar-schools, and construction in French; and other schoolmasters use the same way now, in the year of our Lord 1385, the ninth year of King Richard II., and leave all French in schools, and use all construction in English. Wherein they have advantage one way:—that is, that they learn the sooner their grammar; and in another, disadvantage, for now they learn no French, which is hurt for them that shall pass the sea." It was this change of system, operating upon his early instruction, which caused Caxton, as a translator, to be so diffident of his own capacity to render faithfully what was before him out of French into English. Indeed from his earliest youth to the close of his literary career, the English language was constantly varying, through the introduction of new words and phrases; and there was a marked distinction between the courtly dialect and that of the commonalty. We have seen how he speaks of the broad and rude English of his native Weald. But towards the close of his life, in a book printed by him in 1490, he mentions the difficulty he had in pleasing "some gentlemen, which late blamed me, saying, that in my translations I had over curious terms, which could not be understood of common people, and desired me to use old and homely terms in my transla-

tions. And fain would I satisfy every man; and so to do, took an old book and read therein; and certainly the English was so rude and broad that I could not well understand it. And also my Lord Abbot of Westminster did show to me late certain evidences written in old English, for to reduce it into our English now used, and certainly it was written in such wise that it was more like to Dutch than English; I could not reduce nor bring it to be understood. And certainly our language now used varieth far from that which was used and spoken when I was born: for we Englishmen be born under the domination of the moon, which is never stedfast, but ever wavering, waxing one season, and waneth and decreaseth another season; and that common English that is spoken in one shire varieth from another. Insomuch that in my days happened that certain merchants were in a ship in Thames, for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they tarried at Foreland, and went to land for to refresh them; and one of them named Sheffelde, a mercer, came into an house and asked for meat, and especially he asked after *eggs;* and the good wife answered, that she could speak no French; and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, but would have had eggs, and she understood him not. And then at last, another said that he would have *eyren;* then the good wife said that she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now write, *eggs* or *eyren?* certainly it is hard to

please every man, by cause of diversity and change of language. For in these days, every man that is in any reputation in his country will utter his communication and matters in such manners and terms that few men shall understand them. And some honest and good clerks have been with me, and desired me to write the most curious terms that I could find. And thus between plain, rude, and curious, I stand abashed; but in my judgment, the common terms that be daily used be lighter [easier] to be understood than the old and ancient English." In these days, when the same language with very slight variations is spoken from one end of the land to the other, it is difficult to imagine a state of things such as Caxton describes, in which the "common English which is spoken in one shire varieth from another," and there was a marked distinction between plain terms and curious terms. Easy and rapid communication, and above all the circulation of books, newspapers, and other periodical works, all free from provincial expressions, have made the "over curious terms which could not be understood of common people" more familiar to them than the "old and homely terms" which their forefathers used in their several counties, according to the restricted meanings which they retained in their local use. When there were no books amongst the community in general, there could be no universality of language. Of this want of books we may properly exhibit some details, chiefly to show one of the most re-

markable differences which the lapse of four centuries has produced in our country.

We shall find it, we think, a more agreeable, as well as more instructive course, to look at the general subject of the supply of books in connexion with the orders of people who were to use them, rather than presenting a number of scattered facts, to exhibit the relative prices and scarcity of books in what are called the middle ages. We will first take the clergy, the scholars of those days. The mode in which books were multiplied by transcribers in the monasteries is clearly described by Richard de Bury, bishop of Durham, in his 'Philobiblon,' a treatise on the love of books, written by him in Latin in 1344:—"As it is necessary for a state to provide military arms, and prepare plentiful stores of provisions for soldiers who are about to fight, so it is evidently worth the labour of the church militant to fortify itself against the attacks of pagans and heretics with a multitude of sound books. But because everything that is serviceable to mortals suffers the waste of mortality through lapse of time, it is necessary for volumes corroded by age to be restored by renovated successors, that perpetuity, repugnant to the nature of the individual, may be conceded to the species. Hence it is that Ecclesiastes significantly says, in the 12th chapter, 'There is no end of making many books.' For as the bodies of books suffer continual detriment from a combined mixture of contraries in their composition, so a remedy is found out by

the prudence of clerks, by which a holy book paying the debt of nature may obtain an hereditary substitute, and a seed may be raised up like to the most holy deceased, and that saying of Ecclesiasticus, chapter 30, be verified, 'The father is dead, and as it were not dead, for he hath left behind him a son like unto himself.'" The invention of paper, about a century and a half before Richard de Bury wrote, and its general employment instead of vellum for manuscripts in ordinary use, was a great step towards the multiplication of books. Transcribers necessarily became more numerous; but for a long period they wholly belonged to the monastic orders, and the books were essentially for the use of the clergy. Richard de Bury says, with the most supreme contempt for all others, whatever be their rank, "Laymen, to whom it matters not whether they look at a book turned wrong side upwards or spread before them in its natural order, are altogether unworthy of any communion with books." But even to the privileged classes he is not sparing of his reproach as to the misuse of books. He reprobates the unwashed hands, the dirty nails, the greasy elbows leaning upon the volume, the munching of fruit and cheese over the open leaves, which were the marks of careless and idle readers. With a solemn reverence for a book at which we may smile, but with a smile of respect, he says, "Let there be a mature decorum in opening and closing of volumes, that they may neither be unclasped with precipitous haste, nor thrown

aside after inspection without being duly closed." The good bishop bestowed certain portions of his valuable library upon a company of scholars residing in a Hall at Oxford; and one of his chapters is entitled 'A provident arrangement by which books may be lent to strangers,' meaning, by strangers, students of Oxford not belonging to that Hall. One of these arrangements is as follows:— "Five of the scholars dwelling in the aforesaid Hall are to be appointed by the master of the same Hall, to whom the custody of the books is to be deputed. Of which five, three, and in no case fewer, shall be competent to lend any books for inspection and use only; but for copying and transcribing we will not allow any book to pass without the walls of the house. Therefore, when any scholar, whether secular or religious, whom we have deemed qualified for the present favour, shall demand the loan of a book, the keepers must carefully consider whether they have a duplicate of that book; and if so, they may lend it to him, taking a security which in their opinion shall exceed in value the book delivered." Anthony Wood, who in the seventeenth century wrote the lives of eminent Oxford men, speaks of this library which was given to Durham College (now Trinity College) as containing more books than all the bishops of England had then in their custody. He adds, "After they had been received they were for many years kept in chests, under the custody of several scholars deputed for that purpose." In the

time of Henry IV. a library was built in that college, and then, says Wood, "the said books were put into pews, or studies, and chained to them." The statutes of St. Mary's College, Oxford, in the reign of Henry VI., are quoted by Warton, in his 'History of English Poetry,' as furnishing a remarkable instance of the inconveniences and impediments to study which must have been produced by a scarcity of books: "Let no scholar occupy a book in the library above one hour, or two hours at most, so that others shall be hindered from the use of the same." This certainly shows the scarcity of books; but not such a scarcity as at an early period of the Church, when one book was given out by the librarian to each of a religious fraternity at the beginning of Lent, to be read diligently during the year, and to be returned the following Lent. The original practice of keeping the books in chests would seem to indicate that they could not be very frequently changed by the readers; and the subsequent plan of chaining them to the desks gives the notion that, like many other things tempting by their rarity, they could not be safely trusted in the hands of those who might rather covet the possession than the use. It was a very common thing to write in the first leaf of a book, "Cursed be he who shall steal or tear out the leaves, or in any way injure this book."

We have abundant evidence, whatever be the scarcity of books as compared with the growth of scholarship, that the ecclesiastics laboured most

diligently to multiply books for their own establishments. In every great abbey there was a room called the Scriptorium, where boys and novices were constantly employed in multiplying the service-books of the choir, and the less valuable books for the library; whilst the monks themselves laboured in their cells upon bibles and missals. Equal pains were taken in providing books for those who received a liberal education in collegiate establishments. Warton says, "At the foundation of Winchester College, one or more transcribers were hired and employed by the founder to make books for the library. They transcribed and took their commons within the college, as appears by computations of



Transcriber at Work.

expenses on their account now remaining." But there are several indications that even kings and nobles had not the advantages of scholars by profession; and, possessing few books of their own,

had sometimes to borrow of their more favoured subjects. We find it recorded that the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, had lent to King Henry V. the works of St. Gregory, and he complains that after the king's death the book had been detained by the Prior of Shene. The same king had borrowed from the Lady Westmoreland two books that had not been returned, and a petition is still extant in which she begs his successors in authority to let her have them back again. Lewis XI. of France wishing to borrow a book from the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, they would not allow the king to have it till he had deposited a quantity of valuable plate in pledge, and given a joint bond with one of his nobles for its due return. The books that were to be found in the palaces of the great, a little while before the invention of printing, were for the most part highly illuminated manuscripts, and bound in the most expensive style. In the wardrobe accounts of King Edward IV. we find that Piers Bauduyn is paid for "binding, gilding, and dressing" of two books, twenty shillings each, and of four books, sixteen shillings each. Now twenty shillings in those days would have bought an ox. But the cost of this binding and garnishing does not stop here; for there were delivered to the binder six yards of velvet, six yards of silk, laces, tassels, copper and gilt clasps, and gilt nails. The price of velvet and silk in those days was enormous. We may reasonably conclude that these royal books were as much for

show as for use. One of the books thus garnished by Edward IV.'s binder is called 'Le Bible Historiaux' (The Historical Bible), and there are several copies of the same book in manuscript in the British Museum. In one of them the following paragraph is written in French: "This book was taken from the King of France at the battle of Poitiers; and the good Count of Salisbury, William Mountague, bought it for a hundred marks, and gave it to his lady Elizabeth, the good Countess. . . . . Which book the said Countess assigned to her executors to sell for forty livres." We learn from another source that the great not only procured books by purchase, but employed transcribers to make them for their libraries. We find, from the manuscript account of the expenses of Sir John Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, that in 1467 Thomas Lympnor, that is, Thomas the Limner, of Bury, was paid the sum of fifty shillings and twopence for a book which he had transcribed and ornamented, including the vellum and binding. The Limner's bill is made up of a number of items,—for whole vignettes, and half vignettes, and capital letters, and flourishing, and plain writing. This curious account is printed in the 'Paston Letters.' A letter of Sir John Paston, who is writing to his mother in 1474, shows how scarce money was in those days for the purchase of luxuries like books. He says, "As for the books that were Sir James's (the Priest's), if it like you that I may have them, I am not able to buy them, but somewhat would I

give, and the remainder, with a good devout heart, by my troth, I will pray for his soul. . . . . If any of them are claimed hereafter, in faith I will restore it." The custom of borrowing books and not returning them was as old, we see, as the days of the Red and White Roses. John Paston left an inventory of his books, eleven in number, although some of the eleven contained various little tracts bound together. One of the items in this catalogue is, "A Book of Troilus, which William B—— hath had near ten years, and lent it to Dame Wingfeld, and there I saw it."

But, even in the days before printing, there was a small book-trade; and schemes were devised for making books of some general use. In Paris, in the middle of the 14th century, the booksellers were commanded to keep books for hire; and, in a register of the University of Paris, Chevillier found a list of the books so circulated, and the price of reading each. The hire of a Bible was ten sous. That the ecclesiastics and lawyers constituted the great bulk of readers, and that the addition of a book, even to the private library of a student, was a rare occurrence, is evident from the absolute necessity for manuscript books being dear. If the number of readers had increased—if there had been more candidates for the learned professions—if the nobility had discovered the shame of their ignorance—if learning had made its way to the franklin's hall—manuscript books could never have been cheap. But from the hour when a first large expense of trans-

ferring the letters, syllables, words, and sentences of a manuscript to moveable type was ascertained to be the means of multiplying copies to the extent of any demand, then the greater the demand the greater the cheapness.

If the nobles, the higher gentry, and even the lawyers and ecclesiastics, were indifferently provided with books, we cannot expect that the yeomen had any books whatever. The merchants and citizens were probably somewhat better provided. The labourers, who were scarcely yet fully established in their freedom from bondage to one lord, were probably, as a class, wholly unable to use books at all. Shakspere, in all likelihood, did not much exaggerate the feelings of ignorant men, who at the same time were oppressed men, when he put these words in the mouth of Jack Cade when addressing Lord Say: "Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm, in erecting a grammar-school: and whereas, before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and, contrary to the king, his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill." The poet has a little deranged the exact order of events, as poets are justified in doing, who look at history not with chronological accuracy, but with a broad view of the connexion between events and principles. The insurrection of Cade preceded the introduction of printing and paper-mills into England. Although during four centuries we have yet to lament that the people have not had the full

benefit which the art of printing is calculated to bestow upon them, we may be sure that during its progress the general amelioration of society has been certain, though gradual. There can no longer be any necessary exclusiveness in the possession of books, and in the advantages which the knowledge of books is calculated to bestow on all men. The late Mr. Southey, a just and liberal thinker, but, like many others of ardent feelings, sometimes mistaken and oftener misrepresented, has truly pointed out the difference between the state of society when William Caxton was raised up to do his work amongst us and the present state. The following is an extract from his 'Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society:' "One of the first effects of printing was to make proud men look upon learning as disgraced, by being thus brought within reach of the common people. Till that time learning, such as it was, had been confined to courts and convents, the low birth of the clergy being overlooked, because they were privileged by their order. But when laymen in humble life were enabled to procure books, the pride of aristocracy took an absurd course, insomuch that at one time it was deemed derogatory for a nobleman if he could read or write. Even scholars themselves complained that the reputation of learning, and the respect due to it, and its rewards, were lowered when it was thrown open to all men; and it was seriously proposed to prohibit the printing of any book that could be afforded for sale below the price of three soldi.

This base and invidious feeling was perhaps never so directly avowed in other countries as in Italy, the land where literature was first restored; and yet in this more liberal island ignorance was for some generations considered to be a mark of distinction by which a man of gentle birth chose, not unfrequently, to make it apparent that he was no more obliged to live by the toil of his brain, than by the sweat of his brow. The same changes in society, which rendered it no longer possible for this class of men to pass their lives in idleness, have completely put an end to this barbarous pride. It is as obsolete as the fashion of long finger-nails, which in some parts of the East are still the distinctive mark of those who labour not with their hands. All classes are now brought within the reach of your current literature,—that literature which, like a moral atmosphere, is, as it were, the medium of intellectual life, and on the quality of which, according as it may be salubrious or noxious, the health of the public mind depends."

CHAPTER II.

The Mercer's Apprentice — His Book-knowledge — Commerce in Books — Schools in London — City Apprentices — City Pageants — Spread of English Language — English Writers — Chaucer — Gower — Lydgate — The Minstrels — National Literature.

IN a book which Caxton printed in 1483, 'The Booke callyd Cathon,' he says in his prologue or preface, "Unto the noble, ancient, and renowned city, the city of London in England, I, William Caxton, citizen and conjury [sworn fellow] of the same, and of the fraternity and fellowship of the Mercery, owe of right my service and good will; and of very duty am bounden naturally to assist, aid, and counsel, as farforth as I can to my power, as to my mother of whom I have received my nurture and living; and shall pray for the good prosperity and policy of the same during my life. For as me seemeth it is of great need, by cause I have known it in my young age much more wealthy, prosperous, and richer than it is at this day; and the cause is, that there is almost none that intendeth to the common weal, but only every man for his singular profit." It is the usual habit of the aged to look back upon the days of their youth as a period of higher prosperity and more exalted virtue, public and private, than they witness in their declining years. This is in most cases merely

the mind's own colouring of the picture. But it is very possible that London, in the first year of Richard III., when Caxton wrote this preface, was really less prosperous, and its citizens less devoted to the public good, than half a century earlier, when Caxton was a blithe apprentice within its walls. The country had passed through the terrible convulsion of the wars of the Roses; and it is the nature of civil wars, especially, not only to waste the substance and destroy the means of existence of every man, but to render all men selfish, grasping at temporary good, suspicious, faithless. The master of Caxton was Robert Large, a member of the Mercers' Company, who was one of the Sheriffs in 1430, and Lord Mayor in 1439-40. The date of Caxton's apprenticeship has not been ascertained; but it is considered by several of his biographers to have commenced about 1428. At this period, the sixth of Henry VI., a law was on the statute-book, and rigorously enforced, whose object was to prevent the sons of labourers in husbandry, and indeed of the poorer classes of the yeomanry, from rising out of the condition in which they were born, by participating in the higher gains of trade and handicraft. A law of the seventh of Henry IV., about two-and-twenty years before this conjectural period of Caxton's apprenticeship, recites that, according to ancient statutes, those who labour at the plough or cart, or other service of husbandry, till at the age of twelve years, should continue to abide at such labour, and not to be put to

any mystery or handicraft;—notwithstanding which statutes, says the law of Henry IV., country people whose fathers and mothers have no land or rent are put apprentices to divers crafts within the cities and boroughs, so that there is great scarcity of labourers and other servants of husbandry. The law then declares, "That no man nor woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall put their son or daughtor, of whatsoever age he or she be, to serve as apprentice to no craft or other labour within any city or borough in the realm, except he have land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at least, but they shall be put to other labours as their estates doth require, upon pain of one year's imprisonment." This iniquitous law was necessarily as demoralizing and as injurious to the national prosperity as the institution of castes in India. Yet, by a most extraordinary blindness to cause and consequence, the makers of the law provided in the most direct way for its overthrow; for the statute goes on to say, that, although the husbandry labourer is always to be a labourer, "every man or woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall be free to set their son or daughter to take learning at any manner school that pleaseth them within the realm." The citizens of London, much to their honour, procured a repeal of this act in the eighth of Henry VI., about the period when Caxton was apprenticed. The probability is, that he would not have been affected by the exclusive character of this law; for his master was a rich

and distinguished mercer—a member of that association which has always had pre-eminence amongst the livery companies of London. The dignified gravity, the prudence, and the prosperity of the citizens of that day have been well described by Chaucer:—

> "A Merchant was there with a forkéd beard;
> In motley, and high on horse he sat,
> And on his head a Flaundrish beaver hat.
> His bootés claspéd fair and fetisly; *
> His reasons spake he full solemnély,
> Sounding alway the increase of his winning:
> He would the sea were kept† for any thing,
> Betwixen Middleburgh and Oréwell.
> Well could he in exchanges shieldiés‡ sell,
> This worthy man full well his wit beset;§
> There wisté no wight that he was in debt,
> So stedfastly did he his governance
> With his bargains, and with his chevisance.‖"

When we look at William Caxton as the apprentice to a London mercer, his position does not at first sight appear very favourable to that cultivation of a literary taste, and that love of books, which was originally the solace, and afterwards the business, of his life. Yet a closer insight into the mercantile arrangements of those days will show us that he could not have been more favourably placed for attaining some practical acquaintance with books, in the way of his ordinary occupation. When books were so costly and so inaccessible to the great body of the people, there was necessarily

* Neatly. † Guarded.
‡ 'French crowns, which were stamped with a shield.'
§ Employed. ‖ An agreement for borrowing money.

no special trade of bookselling. There were indeed stationers, who had books for sale, or more probably executed orders for transcribing books. Their occupation is thus described by Mr. Hallam, in his 'Literature of Europe:'—"These dealers were denominated stationarii, perhaps from the open stalls at which they carried on their business, though statio is a general word for a shop, in low Latin. They appear by the old statutes of the university of Paris, and by those of Bologna, to have sold books upon commission; and are sometimes, though not uniformly, distinguished from the librarii; a word which, having originally been confined to the copyists of books, was afterwards applied to those who traded in them. They sold parchment and other materials of writing, which, with us, though, as far as I know, nowhere else, have retained the name of stationery, and naturally exercised the kindred occupations of binding and decorating. They probably employed transcribers." The mercer in those days was not a dealer in small wares generally, as at an earlier period; nor was his trade confined to silken goods—such an one as Shakspere describes, "Master Threepile, the mercer," who had thrown a man into prison for "some four suits of peach-coloured satin." The mercer of the fifteenth century was essentially a merchant. The mercers in the time of Edward III. were the great wool-dealers of the country. They were the merchants of the Staple, in the early days of our woollen manufacture; and the merchant adven-

turers of a later period were principally of their body. In their traffic with other lands, and especially with the Low Countries, they were the agents by which valuable manuscripts found their way into England; and in this respect they were something like the great merchant princes of Italy, whose ships not unfrequently contained a cargo of Indian spices and of Greek manuscripts. John Bagford, who wrote a slight Life of Caxton about 1714, which is in manuscript in the British Museum, says, "Kings, queens, and noblemen had their particular merchants, who, when they were ready for their voyage into foreign parts, sent their servants to know what they wanted, and among the rest of their choice many times books were demanded, and there to buy them in those parts where they were going." Caxton tells us in the 'Book of Good Manners,' which he translated from the French and printed in 1487, that the original French work was delivered to him by a "special friend, a mercer of London, named William Praat." This commerce of books could not have been very great; but it might have been so far carried on by Robert Large, the wealthy master of Caxton, that a lad of ability might thus possess opportunities for improvement which were denied to the great body of his fellow-apprentices. At this particular period there appear to have been but few opportunities even for the sons of parents of some substance to obtain the rudiments of knowledge. There is a petition presented to

parliament in the twenty-fifth year of Henry VI., 1446, which exhorts the Commons "to consider the great number of grammar-schools that sometime were in divers parts of this realm, besides those that were in London, and how few there are in these days." The petitioners, who are four clergymen of the city, go on to say that London is the common concourse of this land, and that many persons, for lack of schoolmasters in their own country, resort there to be informed of grammar; and then they proceed thus: "Wherefore it were expedient that in London were a sufficient number of schools and good informers in grammar; and not, for the singular avail of two or three persons, grievously to hurt the multitude of young people of all this land. For where there is great number of learners and few teachers, and all the learners be compelled to go to the few teachers, and to none others, the masters wax rich of money, and the learners poorer in cunning, as experience openly showeth, against all virtue and order of weal public." These benevolent clergymen accomplished the object of their petition, which was that in each of their parishes they might "ordain, create, establish, and set a person sufficiently learned in grammar to hold and exercise a school in the same science of grammar, and there to teach to all that will learn." One of the schools thus established exists to this day, in connexion with the Mercers' Company, and is commonly known as the Mercers' School. We are a little anticipat-

ing the period of our narrative, for this petition belongs to Caxton's mature life; but we mention it as an evidence of the extreme difficulty which must have existed in those days for the children of the middle classes to obtain the rudiments of knowledge. It is evident that Caxton belonged to the more fortunate portion, upon whom the blessings of education fell like prizes in a lottery. The evil has not been wholly corrected even during four centuries; but it is devoutly to be hoped that the time is not far distant when, to use the words of the benevolent clergymen who knew the value of knowledge at that comparatively dark period, there shall be in every place a school, and a competent person "there to teach to all that will learn."

Oldys, the writer of the Life of Caxton in the 'Biographia Britannica,' says, speaking of Robert Large, the master of Caxton, "The same magistrate held his mayoralty in that which had been the mansion-house of Robert Fitzwalter, anciently called the Jews' Synagogue, at the north corner of the Old Jewry." This Old Jewry appears to have been in earlier times an accustomed place of residence for the mercers; for there are records still extant of legal proceedings in the time of Henry III. against four mercers of that place, for a violent assault upon two Lombard merchants, whom they regarded as rivals in trade. In the days of their retail dealings they occupied a portion of Cheapside which went by the name of the Mercery. In the fourteenth century their shops were little better

than sheds, and Cheapside, or more properly Cheap, was a sort of market, where various trades collected round the old Cross, which remained there till the time of the Long Parliament. When the mercers became large wholesale dealers in woollen cloths and silk, the haberdashers took up their standing in the same place. In the ballad of 'London Lickpenny,' written in the time of Henry VI., the scene in the Cheap is thus described:—

> "Then to the Cheap I began me drawn,
> Where much people I saw for to stand;
> One offered me velvet, silk, and lawn,
> Another he taketh me by the hand,
> 'Here is Paris thread, the finest in the land.'"

The city apprentice in the days of Caxton was a staid sober youth, who, although of gentle blood (as the regulations for the admittance of freemen required him to be), was meanly clothed, and subjected to the performance of even household drudgery. We learn from a tract called the 'City's Advocate,' printed in 1628, that the ancient habit of the apprentices was a flat round cap, hair close cut, narrow falling bands, coarse side-coats (long coats), close hose, close stockings, and other such severe apparel. They walked before their masters and mistresses at night, bearing a lantern, and wearing a long club on their necks. But the mercer's apprentice had some exceptions which set him above his fellows: "Anciently it was the general use and custom of all apprentices in London (mer-

cers only excepted, being commonly merchants and a better rank as it seems) to carry water-tankards to serve their masters' houses with water fetched either from the Thames or the common conduits." But, with all his restraints, the city apprentice was ever prone to frolic, and too often to mischief. The apprentices were a formidable body in the days of the Tudors, sometimes defying the laws, and raising tumults which have more than once ended in the prison and the halter. Chaucer, writing some few years before the term of Caxton's service, describes the love of sight-seeing which was characteristic of the London apprentice :—

> "When there any ridings were in Cheap,
> Out of the shop thither would he leap;
> And till that he had all the sight yseen,
> And danced well, he would not come again."

Cheap was the great highway of processions; and London was the constant theatre of triumphs and pageants, by which the wealthy citizens expressed their devotion to their ruling authorities. In the fifteenth century, when the very insecurity of the tenure of the crown demanded a more ardent display of public opinion, the London apprentice had "ridings" enough to look upon, where the pageantry was a real expression of power and magnificence, and not a tawdry mockery, as that which now disgraces the city of London once a year. Froissart describes the riding of Henry IV. to his coronation. The entry of his illustrious son into London after the battle of Agincourt was

another of these remarkable ridings. This, which was an occasion of real enthusiasm, took place in Caxton's childhood. But in 1432, when he is held to have been an apprentice, the boy king, Henry VI., upon his return from being crowned King of France, entered London with a magnificence which chroniclers and poets have vied in recording. Robert Fabyan, an alderman of London, who wrote in the reign of Henry VII., describes this ceremonial with such an admiration of the pomp, as only one could be supposed to feel who was born, as Chaucer says,

"To sitten in a guildhall on the dais."

To look forward to such occasions of pomp was a satisfaction to the people, who knew nothing of the real workings of public affairs, and saw only the outward indications of success or misfortune. The reign of Henry VI. was an unhappy one for the citizens of London. Violent contests for authority, insurrections, battles for the crown, left their fearful traces upon the course of the next thirty years. But during Caxton's boyhood the evil days seemed distant.

In the books of the Brewers' Company, which, like all other records, were for the most part in Norman French, there is a curious entry in the reign of Henry V., which records a great change in the habits of the people. The entry is in Latin, and is thus translated: "Whereas our mother-tongue, to wit, the English language, hath in modern days

begun to be honourably enlarged and adorned, for that our most excellent lord King Henry the Fifth hath in his letters missive, and divers affairs touching his own person, more willingly chosen to declare the secrets of his will; and for the better understanding of his people hath, with a diligent mind, procured the common idiom (setting aside others) to be commended by the exercise of writing; and there are many of our craft of brewers who have the knowledge of writing and reading in the said English idiom, but in others, to wit, the Latin and French, before these times used, they do not in any wise understand; for which causes, with many others, it being considered how that the greater part of the lords and trusty commons have begun to make their matters to be noted down in our mother-tongue, so we also in our craft, following in some manner their steps, have decreed in future to commit to memory the needful things which concern us, as appeareth in the following."

The assertion of the Brewers' Company, in the reign of Henry V., that "the English language hath in modern days begun to be honourably enlarged and adorned," rested, we apprehend, upon broader foundations than the "letters missive" of the king in the common idiom. Great writers had arisen in our native tongue, with whose productions the nobler and wealthier classes at any rate were familiar. The very greatest of these,—the greatest name even now in our literature, with one exception,—must have furnished employment to hun-

dreds of transcribers. The poems of Geoffrey Chaucer were familiar to all well-educated men, however scanty was the supply of copies and dear their cost. That Caxton himself was acquainted in his youth with these great works we cannot have a doubt. When it became his fortunate lot to multiply editions of the Canterbury Tales, and to render them accessible to a much larger class of the people than in the days when he himself first knew the solace and the delight of literature, he applied himself to the task with all the earnestness of an early love. In his preface to the second edition of the Canterbury Tales he thus delivers himself, with more than common enthusiasm: "Great thanks, laud, and honour ought to be given unto the clerks, poets, and historiographs that have written many noble books of wisdom of the lives, passions, and miracles of holy saints, of histories, of noble and famous acts and faits [deeds], and of the chronicles sith [since] the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present time; by which we are daily informed and have knowledge of many things, of whom we should not have known if they had not left to us their monuments written. Amongst whom, and in especial before all other, we ought to give a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher Geoffrey Chaucer, the which, for his ornate writing in our tongue, may well have the name of a laureat poet. For before that he, by his labour, embellished, ornated, and made fair our English, in this royaume [kingdom], was

had rude speech and incongrue [incongruous], as yet it appeareth by old books, which at this day ought not to have place nor be compared among nor to his beauteous volumes and ornate writings, of whom he made many books and treatises of many a noble history, as well in metre as in rhyme and prose; and them so craftily made, that he comprehended his matters in short, quick, and high sentences; eschewing prolixity, casting away the chaff of superfluity, and shewing the picked grain of sentence, uttered by crafty and sugared eloquence." Again, in his edition of Chaucer's 'Book of Fame' he says, "Which work, as me seemeth, is craftily made, and worthy to be written and known: for he toucheth in it right great wisdom and subtle understanding; and so in all his works he excelleth in mine opinion all other writers in our English; for he writeth no void words, but all his matter is full of high and quick sentence, to whom ought to be given laud and praising for his noble making and writing. For of him all other have borrowed sith, and taken in all their well saying and writing." There is another passage in the second edition of the Canterbury Tales which we quote here, not for the purpose of showing Caxton's honourable character as a printer, for that belongs to a subsequent period, but to point out that manuscripts of Chaucer were in private hands, varying indeed in their text, as books must have varied that were produced by different transcribers, but still keeping up the fame of the poet, and

highly valued by their possessors: "Of which book so incorrect was one brought to me six year passed, which I supposed had been very true and correct, and according to the same I did imprint a certain number of them, which anon were sold to many and divers gentlemen: of whom one gentleman came to me, and said that this book was not according in many places unto the book that Geoffrey Chaucer had made. To whom I answered, that I had made it according to my copy, and by me was nothing added nor diminished. Then he said he knew a book which his father had and much loved, that was very true, and according unto his own first book by him made; and said more, if I would imprint it again, he would get me the same book for a copy. How be it, he wist well his father would not gladly part from it; to whom I said, in case that he could get me such a book true and correct, that I would once endeavour me to imprint it again, for to satisfy the author: whereas before by ignorance I erred in hurting and defaming his book in divers places, in setting in some things that he never said nor made, and leaving out many things that he made which are requisite to be set in. And thus we fell at accord; and he full gently got me of his father the said book, and delivered it to me, by which I have corrected my book."

There was another poet of considerable popularity who was contemporary with Chaucer. With the works of Gower, Caxton must have been fami-

liar. His principal poem, 'Confessio Amantis,' was printed by Caxton in 1483, and is said to have been the most extensively circulated of all the books that came from his press. The poem is full of stories that were probably common to all Europe, running on through thousands of lines with wonderful fluency, but little force. He was called the "moral Gower" by Chaucer. The play of Pericles, ascribed to Shakspere, is founded upon one of these stories. Gower himself shows us what was the general course of reading in those days:—

"Full oft time it falleth so,
Mine ear with a good pittance
Is fed of reading of romance,
Of Idoyne, and of Amadas,
That whilom* weren† in my case,
And eke of other many a score,
That loveden‡ long ere I was boré."§

The romances of chivalry, the stories of "fierce wars and faithful loves," were especially the delight of the great and powerful. When the noble was in camp, he solaced his hours of leisure with the marvellous histories of King Arthur or Launcelot of the Lake; and when at home, he listened to or read the same stories in the intervals of the chace or the feast. Froissart tells in his own simple and graphic manner how he presented a book to King Richard the Second, and how the king delighted in the subject of the book: "Then the king desired to see my book that I had brought for him; so he saw it in his chamber, for I had laid it there ready

* Formerly. † Were. ‡ Loved. § Born.

on his bed. When the king opened it, it pleased him well, for it was fair illumined and written, and covered with crimson velvet, with ten buttons of silver and gilt, and roses of gold in the midst, with two great clasps, gilt, richly wrought. Then the king demanded me whereof it treated, and I showed him how it treated matters of love, whereof the king was glad, and looked in it, and read it in many places, for he could speak and read French very well." Froissart was a Frenchman and wrote in French; but even Englishmen wrote in French at that period, and some of Gower's early poems are in French. According to his own account, the long poem of the 'Confessio Amantis,' which was written in English, was executed at the command of the same King Richard:—

> "He hath this charge upon me laid,
> And bad me do my business,
> That to his high worthiness
> Some new thing I should book,
> That he himself it might look,
> After the form of my writing."

Chaucer and Gower lived some time before the period of Caxton's youth in London. But there was a poet very popular in his day, whom he can scarcely have avoided having seen playing a conspicuous part in the high city festivals. This was John Lydgate, monk of Bury, who thus describes himself—

> "I am a monk by my profession,
> Of Bury, called John Lydgate by my name,
> And wear a habit of perfection,
> Although my life agree not with the same."

Thomas Warton has thus exhibited the nature of his genius: "No poet seems to have possessed a greater versatility of talents. He moves with equal ease in every mode of composition. His hymns and his ballads have the same degree of merit: and whether his subject be the life of a hermit or a hero, of Saint Austin or Guy Earl of Warwick, ludicrous or legendary, religious or romantic, a history or an allegory, he writes with facility. His transitions were rapid from works of the most serious and laborious kind to sallies of levity and pieces of popular entertainment. His muse was of universal access, and he was not only the poet of his monastery, but of the world in general. If a disguising was intended by the company of goldsmiths, a mask before his majesty at Eltham, a May game for the sheriffs and aldermen of London, a mumming before the lord mayor, a procession of pageants from the creation for the festival of Corpus Christi, or a carol for a coronation, Lydgate was consulted and gave the poetry." A fine illuminated drawing in one of Lydgate's manuscripts, now in the British Museum, represents him presenting a book to the Earl of Salisbury. Such a presentation may be regarded as the first publication of a new work. The royal or noble person at whose command it was written bestowed some rich gift upon the author, which would be his sole pecuniary recompence, unless he received some advantage from the transcribers, for the copies which they multiplied. Doubtful as the



Lydgate presenting a book to the Earl of Salisbury.

rewards of authorship may be when the multiplication of copies by the press enables each reader to contribute a small acknowledgment of the benefit which he receives, the literary condition must have been far worse when the poet, humbly kneeling before some mighty man, as Lydgate does in the picture, might have been dismissed with contumely, or his present received with a low appreciation of the labour and the knowledge required to produce it. The fame, however, of a popular writer reached

his ears in a far more direct and flattering manner than belongs to the literary honours of modern days. There can be little doubt that the narrative poems of Chaucer and Gower and Lydgate were familiar to the people through the recitations of the minstrels. An agreeable writer on the Rise and Progress of English Poetry, Mr. George Ellis, says, "Chaucer, in his address to his Troilus and Cressida, tells us it was intended to be read 'or elles sung,' which must relate to the chanting recitation of the minstrels, and a considerable part of our old poetry is simply addressed to an audience, without any mention of readers. That our English minstrels at any time united all the talents of the profession, and were at once poets and reciters and musicians, is extremely doubtful; but that they excited and directed the efforts of their contemporary poets to a particular species of composition, is as evident as that a body of actors must influence the exertions of theatrical writers. They were, at a time when reading and writing were rare accomplishments, the principal medium of communication between authors and the public; and their memory in some measure supplied the deficiency of manuscripts, and probably preserved much of our early literature till the invention of printing." We may thus learn, that, although the number of those was very few whose minds by reading could be lifted out of the grovelling thoughts and petty cares of every-day life, yet that the compositions of learned and accomplished men, who still hold a

high rank in our literature, might be familiar to the people through the agency of a numerous body of singers or reciters. There has been a good deal of controversy about the exact definition of the minstrel character—whether the minstrels were themselves poets and romance-writers, or the depositaries of the writings of others and of the traditional literature of past generations. Ritson, a writer upon this subject, says, "that there were individuals formerly who made it their business to wander up and down the country chanting romances, and singing songs and ballads to the harp, fiddle, or more humble and less artificial instruments, cannot be doubted." They were a very numerous body a century before Chaucer; and most indefatigable in the prosecution of their trade. There is a writ or declaration of Edward the Second, which recites the evil of idle persons, under colour of minstrelsy, being received in other men's houses to meat and drink; and then goes on to direct that to the houses of great people no more than three or four minstrels of honour should come at the most in one day, "and to the houses of meaner men that none come unless he be desired, and such as shall come to hold themselves contented with meat and drink, and with such courtesy as the master of the house will show unto them of his own good-will, without their asking of anything." Nothing can more clearly exhibit the general demand for the services of this body of men; for the very regulation as to the nature of their reward shows clearly

that they were accustomed to require liberal payment, approaching perhaps to extortion; and then comes in the State to say that they shall not have a free market for their labour. They struggled on, sometimes prosperous and sometimes depressed, according to the condition of the country, till the invention of printing came to make popular literature always present in a man's house. The *book* of ballads or romances, which was then to be bought, was contented to abide there without any "meat and drink." In the words of Richard de Bury, whom we quoted in the first chapter, books "are the masters who instruct us without rods, without hard words and anger, without clothes and money. If you approach them, they are not asleep; if investigating you interrogate them, they conceal nothing; if you mistake them, they never grumble; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you." One of the later ministrels, to whom is ascribed the preservation, and by some the composition, of the old ballad of Chevy Chase, thus humbles himself in a most unpoetical and undignified manner to those who fed him for his services :—

"Now for the good cheer that I have had here
I give you hearty thanks with bowing of my shanks,
Desiring you by petition to grant me such commission—
Because my name is Sheale—that both for meat and meal
To you I may resort some time for my comfort.
For I perceive here at all times is good cheer,
Both ale, wine, and beer, as it doth now appear;
I perceive, without fable, ye keep a good table.
I can be content, if it be out of Lent,
A piece of beef to take, my hunger to aslake;
Both mutton and veal is good for Richard Sheale,

Though I look so grave, I were a very knave
If I would think scorn, either evening or morn,
Being in hunger, of fresh salmon or congar.
I can find in my heart with my friends to take a part
Of such as God shall send; and thus I make an end.
Now, farewell, good mine host; I thank you for your cost,
Until another time, and thus do I end my rhyme."

But even such a humiliated ballad-maker, or ballad-singer, as poor old Richard Sheale, was the depositary of treasures of popular fiction, many of which have utterly perished, but of which a great portion of those which are still preserved are delightful even to the most refined reader. For, corrupted as they are by transmission from mouth to mouth through several centuries, they are full of high and generous sentiments, of deep pathos, of quiet humour; they carry us back into a state of society wholly different from our own, when knowledge was indeed scanty, and riches not very plentiful, but when the feelings and affections were not so wholly under the direction of worldly wisdom, and men were brave and loving, and women tender and confiding, with something more of earnestness than belongs to the discreeter arrangements of modern social life. The minstrels had indeed something to call up the tear or the smile in every class of auditor. For the earls and barons, the knights and squires, there were romances and songs of chivalrous daring, such as moved the noble heart of Sir Philip Sidney, even in the days when the minstrel was a poor despised wanderer: "Is it the Lyric that most displeaseth, who, with his tuned lyre and well-accorded voice, giveth praise, the reward of virtue,

to virtuous acts? who giveth moral precepts and natural problems? who sometimes raiseth up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God? Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness, I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet, and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style." For those of meaner sort there were the ballads of Robin Hood, "of whom the foolish vulgar make lewd entertainment, and are delighted to hear the jesters and minstrels sing them above all other ballads." So wrote a Scottish historian in the middle of the fourteenth century.

We have thus briefly recapitulated the popular modes of acquiring something of a literary taste in the early days of William Caxton. Books were rare, and difficult to be obtained except by the wealthy. The drama did not exist. The preachers, indeed, were not afraid to address an indiscriminate audience with the conviction that, although the majority were unlettered, they had vigorous understandings, and did not require the great truths of religion and of private and of social duty to be adapted to any intellectual weakness or infirmity. The national poetry, which was heard at the high festivals of the city traders, and even descended to as lowly a popularity as that of the village circle upon the ale-bench under the spreading elm on a summer's eve, had no essentials of vulgarity or

childishness, such as in later days have been thought necessary for general comprehension. We were ever a thoughtful people, a reasoning people, and yet a people of strong passions and unconquerable energy. A popular literature was kept alive and preserved, however imperfectly, before the press came to make those who had learnt to read self-dependent in their intellectual gratifications; and what has come down to us of the old minstrelsy, with all its inaccuracy and occasional feebleness, shows us that the people of England, four or five centuries ago, had a common fund of high thought upon which a great literature might in time be reared. The very existence of a poet like Chaucer is the best proof of the vigour, and to a certain extent of the cultivation, of the national mind, even in an age when books were rarities.

CHAPTER III.

Caxton abroad—Caxton's mercantile pursuits—Restrictions on Trade—Caxton's Commission—Merchants' Marks—Beginnings of Printing—Playing Cards—Wood-engraving—Block-books—Moveable Types—Guttenberg—Guttenberg's Statue—Festival at Mentz.

ROBERT LARGE, the master of Caxton, became Lord Mayor of London in 1439-40. He died in 1441. That he was a man of considerable substance appears by the record of his bequests, in Stow's Survey of London: "Robert Large, mercer, mayor 1440, gave to his parish church of St. Olave, in Surrey, two hundred pounds; to St. Margaret's, in Lothbury, twenty-five pounds; to the poor, twenty pounds; to London-bridge, one hundred marks; towards the vaulting over the watercourse of Walbrook, two hundred marks; to poor maids' marriages, one hundred marks; to poor householders, one hundred pounds."* By his last will he bequeathed to his servant, William Caxton, twenty marks, a considerable sum in those days. From this period it would seem that Caxton resided abroad. In the first book he translated, the "Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye," which bears upon the title to have been "ended and

* We believe that the text of Stow, "St. Olave in *Surrey*," is a mistake for "St. Olave in *Jewry*,"—for Robert Large was buried in St. Olaue in the Jewry, where a plated stone in the ground, in the south aisle, recorded his death on the 24th of April, 1441.

finished in the holy city of Cologne, the 19th day of September, the year of our Lord one thousand, four hundred, sixty, and eleven," he says, "I have continued by the space of thirty year for the most part in the countries of Brabant, Flanders, Holland, and Zealand." The Rev. John Lewis, who wrote the Life of Master William Caxton, about a century ago, says, "It has been guessed that he was abroad as a travelling agent or factor for the Company of Mercers, and employed by them in the business of merchandise." Oldys adds, but certainly without any authority, "It is agreed on by those writers who have best acquainted themselves with his story, he was deputed and intrusted by the Mercers' Company to be their agent or factor in Holland, Zealand, Flanders, &c., to establish and enlarge their correspondents, negociate the consumption of our own, and importation of foreign manufactures, and otherwise promote the advantage of the said corporation in their respective merchandise." This, indeed, was a goodly commission, if we can make out that he ever received such,—an employment which seems to speak of free and liberal intercourse between two countries, each requiring the commodities of the other, and conducting their interchange upon the sound principles of encouraging mutual consumption, and thus producing mutual profit. Doubtless, we may believe, upon a superficial view of the matter, that the agent of the Mercers' Company was conducting his operations with the full authority of the govern-

ment at home, and with the hearty support of the rulers of the land in which he so long lived. The real fact is, that for twenty of those years in which Caxton describes himself as residing in the countries of Brabant, Holland, and Zealand, there was an absolute prohibition on both sides of all commercial intercourse between England and the Duchy of Burgundy, to which those countries were subject; and for nearly the whole period, no English goods were suffered to pass to the continent, except through the town of Calais; and "in France," says Caxton, "I was never." If Caxton had any mercantile employment at all from his Company, it was, in all probability, for the purpose of finding channels in trade that were closed up by the blind policy of the respective governments. He could not have conducted any mercantile operation in those countries, except in violation of the absurd commercial laws which would not allow the people to seek their own interest in their own way. It is by no means improbable, however, that by the connivance of the royal personages who wanted for themselves rich commodities which they could only obtain by that exchange which they denied their subjects, William Caxton was in truth an accredited smuggler for law-makers who attempted to limit the wants, and the means of satisfying the wants, of the people they governed, in deference to the prejudices of those who thought that trade could only exist under a system of the most stringent prohibition.

While Edward the Fourth, and Charles the Good, Duke of Burgundy, were launching against each other ordinance and enactment to prevent their subjects becoming exchangers for the better supply of their respective wants, some politic understanding between these princes led them eventually to adopt a wiser system. It is pretty clear that William Caxton was one of the agents, and a principal one, in putting an end to a policy which the Duke of Burgundy said was "evermore to endure." In 1464 Edward the Fourth issued a commission to his trusty and well-beloved Richard Whitehill and William Caxton, to be his especial ambassadors, procurators, nuncios, and deputies to his most dear cousin the Duke of Burgundy for the purpose of confirming an existing treaty of commerce, or, if necessary, for making a new one. In 1466, this commission being dated in October, 1464, a treaty was concluded with the Duke of Burgundy, by which the commerce between his dominions and England, which had been interrupted for twenty years, was restored; and a port of Flanders was subsequently appointed to be a port of the English staple, as well as Calais. It is pleasant to us to believe that this extension of a principle which must eventually bind all nations in a common brotherhood was effected by the good sense of a mercer of London; who was afterwards to bestow upon his country the blessings of an art which has been the great instrument of that country's progress in real greatness and prosperity, and before which all

impediments to the continued course of that prosperity—all prejudices amongst her own children, or amongst other peoples, that make the great family of mankind aliens and enemies, and keep them from the enjoyment of the advantages which each might bestow upon the other—will utterly perish. It is pleasant to us to believe that William Caxton, the first English printer, in his day opened the ports of one great trading community to another great trading community. When he, the mercer's apprentice, stamped the merchant's mark upon his



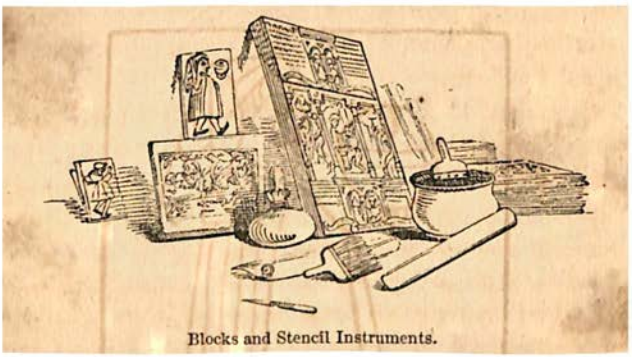
Merchants' Marks.

master's bales, he knew not, he could not have divined, that by this process of stamping, carried forward by the ingenuity of many men into a new art, there would arise consequences which would change the face of the world. He could not imagine that he, whose education had consisted in learning to buy wool and measure cloth, should, by the natural course of his commercial life, be thrown into a society where a great wonder was to fill the minds of all men with astonishment—the multiplication of manuscripts by some new and secret process, as if by magic; and which some men, and he probably amongst the number, must have regarded with a

higher feeling than wonder,—with something like that prophetic view of its consequences which have been described by the novelist, who, perhaps more than any man, has employed that art to the delight of all classes in every country. We refer to the passage in Sir Walter Scott's Quentin Durward, where Louis the Eleventh of France, and Martivalle Galeotti the astrologer, speak of the invention of printing, and the sage predicts "the lot of a succeeding generation, on whom knowledge will descend like the first and second rain, uninterrupted, unabated, unbounded, fertilizing some grounds, and overflowing others; changing the whole form of social life."

In a list of foreign goods forbidden to be imported into this country by statute of 1464, the reader might be surprised to find that playing-cards were of sufficient importance, from their general use, to require that the native manufactories should be protected in the production of them. Playing-cards were known in France for more than a hundred years before this statute of Edward IV.; so that the common notion that they were invented to furnish amusement to an insane king, Charles VI. of France, about 1393, is a popular error. It is clear that both in France and Spain at that period cards were the amusement not only of the royal and noble inmates of palaces, but of the burghers and the working people. The King of Castile, in 1387, prohibited cards altogether; and they appear, with other

games of skill and chance, to have interfered so much with the regular labour of the artificers of Paris, that the provost of that city, in 1397, forbade all working people to play at tennis, bowls, nine-pins, dice, or cards, on working-days. The earliest cards were probably painted by means of a stencil, by which name we call a piece of pasteboard or plate of thin metal pierced with apertures, by which a figure is formed upon paper or other substance beneath it when fluid colour is smeared over its surface with a brush. But it has



Blocks and Stencil Instruments.

also been conjectured, from their being in the hands of the working-people, that their cheapness must have been produced by some rude application of a wood-engraving to form the outline which the stencilling process filled up with colour. There can be no doubt that cards were *printed* before the middle of the fifteenth century; for there is a petition extant from the Venetian *painters* to their magistracy, dated 1441, setting forth that the art and

mystery of card-making and of *printing* figures, which were practised in Venice, had fallen into total decay, through the great quantity of foreign playing-cards and coloured printed figures which were brought into the city. The Germans were the great card-makers of this period; and the name by which a wood-engraver is still called in Germany, *Formschneider*, meaning figure-cutter, occurs in the town books of Nuremburg as early as 1441. Some of the early cards were very rude. Here is the Knave of Bells—for spades, diamonds,



Knave of Bells.

hearts, and clubs were not then the universal symbols. Others called forth the skill of very clever artists, such as he who is known as "the Master of 1466," whose knave is a much more



Knave, of Master of 1466.

human knave than the traditionary worthy whom we look upon to this hour. When Caxton, therefore, was abroad for thirty years, he would unquestionably have seen every variety of these painted bits of paper; some rich with crimson and purple, oftentimes painted on a golden ground, and calling forth, like the missals, the highest art of the limner; others impressed with a rude outline, and daubed by the stenciller. It appears that the impressions of the engraved cards, as well as of most of the ear-

lier block-prints, were taken off by friction. This is the mode by which, even at the present day, wood-engravers take off the specimen impressions of their works called proofs. The Chinese produce their block-books in a similar manner, without the aid of a press.

But there was another application of engraved blocks, about the same period, which was approaching still nearer to the art of printing. The representations of saints and of scriptural histories, which the limners in the monasteries had for several centuries been painting in their missals and bibles, were copied in outline; and being divested of their brilliant colours and rich gilding, presented figures exceedingly rude in their want of proportion, and grotesque in their constrained and violent attitudes. But they were nevertheless highly popular; and as the pictures were accompanied with a few sentences from Scripture, they probably supplied the first inducement to the laity to learn to read, and thus prepared the way for that diffusion of knowledge which was to accompany the invention of printing from moveable types. In the collection of Earl Spencer there is a very curious print from a wood-block, representing St. Christopher carrying the infant Saviour. This print bears the date 1423. It is probably not the earliest specimen of the art; but it is the earliest undoubted document which determines with precision the period when wood-engraving was generally applied to objects of devotion. In a very few years from the date of this

print the art was carried onward to a more important object,—that of producing a *book*.

Several of such books are now in existence, and are known as block-books. One of them is commonly called 'Biblia Pauperum,' the Bible of the Poor. But an ingenious writer on the progress of woodcutting, in the valuable book on that subject published by Mr. John Jackson, has shown very clearly that this was not the original title of the book; and he adds that it was rather a book for the use of preachers than the laity:—"A series of skeleton sermons ornamented with woodcuts to warm the preacher's imagination, and stored with texts to assist his memory." This very rare book consists of forty leaves of small folio, each of which contains a cut in wood, with extracts from the Scriptures, and other illustrative sentences. Of other block-books the most remarkable is called 'Speculum Salutis,'—the Mirror of Salvation. In this performance the explanations of the text are much fuller than in the 'Biblia Pauperum.' In addition to these works, wooden blocks were also used to print small manuals of grammar, called Donatuses, which were used in schools. We present a facsimile of a woodcut from one of the early block-books.

The use of carved blocks for the multiplication of copies of playing-cards and devotional pictures gave birth to a principle which has effected, and is still effecting, the most important changes in the world. These devotional pictures had short



The Wise Men's Offering.

legends or texts attached to them; and when a text had to be printed, it was engraved in a solid piece, as well as the picture. The first person who seized upon the idea that the text or legend might be composed of separate letters capable of re-arrangement after the impressions were taken off, so as to be applied, without new cutting, to other texts and legends, had secured the principle upon which the printing art was to depend. It was easy to extend the principle from a few lines to a whole page, and from one page to many, so as to form a book; but then were seen the great labour and expense of cutting so many separate letters upon small pieces of wood or metal, and another step was required to be made before the principle was thoroughly worked out. This step consisted in the ready multiplication of the separate letters by casting metal in moulds. Lastly, instead of using the old Chinese mode of friction to produce impressions, a *press* was to be perfected. All these gradations were undoubtedly the result of long and patient experiments carried on by several individuals, who each saw the importance of the notion they were labouring to work out. It is this circumstance which has given rise to interminable controversies as to the inventors of printing, some claiming the honour for Coster of Haarlem, and some for Guttenberg of Mentz; and, as is usual in all such disputes, it was represented that the man to whom public opinion had assigned the credit of the invention had stolen it from another, who, as is

also usual in these cases, thought of it in a dream, or received it by some other mysterious revelation. The general consent of Europe now assigns the chief honour to Guttenberg.*

During the summer of 1837 a statue of John Guttenberg, by Thorwaldsen, was erected at Mentz (or Mayence), and on the 14th of August and the following days a festival was held there, upon the occasion of the inauguration of the monument. Abundant evidence has been brought forward of late years to show that Guttenberg deserves all the honours of having conceived, and in great part perfected, an art which has produced the most signal effects upon the destinies of mankind. At that festival of Mentz, at which many hundred persons were assembled, from all parts of Europe, to do honour to the inventor of printing, no rival pretensions were put forward; although many of the compatriots of Coster of Haarlem were present. The fine statue of Guttenberg was opened amidst an universal burst of enthusiasm. Never were the shouts of a vast multitude raised on a more elevating occasion;—never were the triumphs of intellect celebrated with greater fervour.

Passing his life amidst the ceaseless activity that belongs to the commerce of literature in London, the writer of this volume felt no common interest in the enthusiasm which the festival in honour of Guttenberg called forth throughout Germany; and he determined to attend that celebration. The fine

* See Appendix A.

statue which was to be opened to public view on the 14th of August had been erected by a general subscription, to which all Europe was invited to contribute. We apprehend that the English, amidst the incessant claims upon their attention for the support of all sorts of undertakings, whether of a national or individual character, had known little of the purpose which the good citizens of Mentz had been advocating with unabated zeal for several years;—and perhaps the object itself was not calculated to call forth any very great liberality on the part of those who are often directed in their bounties as much by fashion as by their own convictions. Thus it is that we have monuments out of number to warriors. Caxton has no monument; neither has Shakspere. Be that as it may, England literally gave nothing towards the statue of a man whose invention has done as much as any other single cause to make England what she is. The remoteness of the cause may also have lessened its importance; and some people, who, without any deserts of their own, are enjoying a more than full share of the blessings which have been shed upon us by the progress of intellect (which determines the progress of national wealth), have a sort of instinctive notion that the spread of knowledge is the spread of something inimical to the pretensions of mere riches. We met with a lady on board the steamboat ascending the Rhine, two days before the festival of Mentz, who, whilst she gave us an elaborate account of the fashionable dullness of the

baths of Baden and Nassau, and all the other German watering-places, told us by all means to avoid Mentz during the following week, as a crowd of low people from all parts would be there, to make a great fuss about a printer who had been dead two or three hundred years. The low people did assemble in great crowds: it was computed that at least fifteen thousand strangers had arrived to do honour to the first printer.

The modes in which a large population displays its enthusiasm are pretty much the same throughout the world. If the sentiment which collects men together be very heart-stirring, all the outward manifestations of the sentiment harmonize with its real truth. Thus, processions, and orations, and public dinners, and pageantries which in themselves are vain and empty, are important when the persons whom they collect together have one common feeling which for the time is all-pervading. We never saw such a popular fervour as prevailed at Mentz at the festival of August, 1837. The statue was to be opened on Monday the 14th; but on the Sunday evening the name of Guttenberg was rife through all the streets. In the morning all Mentz was in motion by six o'clock; and at eight a procession was formed to the Cathedral, which, if it was not much more imposing than some of the processions of trades in London and other cities, was conducted with a quiet precision which evidenced that the people felt they were engaged in a solemn act. The fine old Cathedral was

crowded;—the Bishop of Mentz performed high Mass;—the first Bible printed by Guttenberg was displayed. What a field for reflection was here opened! The first Bible, in connexion with the imposing pageantries of Roman Catholicism—the Bible, in great part a sealed book to the body of the people; the service of God in a tongue unknown to the larger number of worshippers;—but that first Bible the germ of millions of Bibles that have spread the light of Christianity throughout all the habitable globe! The Mass ended, the procession again advanced to the adjacent square, where the statue was to be opened. Here was erected a vast amphitheatre, where, seated under their respective banners, were deputations from all the great cities of Europe. Amidst salvos of artillery the veil was removed from the statue, and a hymn was sung by a thousand voices. Then came orations;—then dinners—balls—oratorios—boat-races—processions by torchlight. For three days the population of Mentz was kept in a state of high excitement; and the echo of the excitement went through Germany,—and Guttenberg! Guttenberg! was toasted in many a bumper of Rhenish wine amidst this cordial and enthusiastic people.

And, indeed, even in one who could not boast of belonging to the land in which printing was invented, the universality of the mighty effects of this art, when rightly considered, would produce almost a corresponding enthusiasm. It is difficult to look upon the great changes that have been ef-

fected during the last four centuries, and which are still in progress everywhere around us, and not connect them with printing and with its inventor. The castles on the Rhine, under whose ruins we travelled back from Mentz, perished before the powerful combinations of the people of the towns. The petty feudal despots fell, when the burghers had acquired wealth and knowledge. But the progress of despotism upon a larger scale could not have been arrested had the art of Guttenberg not been discovered. The strongholds of military power still frown over the same majestic river. The Rhine has seen its pretty fortresses crumble into decay;—Ehrenbreitstein is more strong than ever. But even Ehrenbreitstein will fall before the power of mind. The Rhine is crowded with steamboats, where the feudal lord once levied tribute upon the frail bark of the fisherman; and the approaches to the Rhine from all Germany, and from France and Belgium, have become a great series of railroads. Such communications will make war a game much more difficult to play; and when mankind are thoroughly civilized, it will never be played again. Seeing, then, what intellect has done and is doing, we may well venerate the memory of Guttenberg of Mentz.

CHAPTER IV.

The Court of Burgundy—Caxton a Translator—Literature of Chivalry — Feudal Times — Caxton at the Ducal Court — Did Caxton print at Bruges — Edward the Fugitive — The new Art.

THE "most dear" Duke of Burgundy, with whom Caxton was appointed to negotiate in 1464, was Philip, surnamed the Good. He was a wise and peaceful prince, and honourably earned his title. We know not whether Caxton was in immediate attendance upon the court of Philip from the commencement of his mission until the death of the duke in 1467; but the evidence is subsequently clear that he was about the court in some office of trust after the succession to the dukedom of the eldest son of Philip, the Count of Charolois. The character of this prince was entirely opposed to that of his father; and he acquired the name of Charles le Téméraire, or the Rash. This fiery prince, whose influence in that warlike age was perhaps greater than the benignant power of his father, was not likely to have looked very favourably upon an envoy from Edward of England: for he was allied by blood on his mother's side to the house of Lancaster, and was consequently opposed to the fortunes of the house of York. The court of Burgundy was the resort of many of the adher-

ents of that unhappy house, who had fled from England after many a vain struggle with the triumphant Edward. These fugitives are described by Comines "as young gentlemen whose fathers had been slain in England, whom the Duke of Burgundy had generously entertained as his relations of the house of Lancaster." Comines adds, "Some of them were reduced to such extremity of want and poverty before the Duke of Burgundy received them, that no common beggar could have been in greater; I saw one of them, who was Duke of Exeter (but he concealed his name), following the Duke of Burgundy's train bare-foot and bare-legged, begging his bread from door to door: this person was the next of the house of Lancaster; had married King Edward's sister: and being afterwards known, had a small pension allowed him for his subsistence. There were also some of the family of the Somersets, and several others, all of them slain since, in the wars." But the policy of Charles of Burgundy, after his accession to the dukedom, led him to consider the ties of ancient friendship as of far less importance than the strengthening of his hand by an alliance with the successful house of York. Within a year of his accession he married Margaret, sister of Edward IV. Comines says this marriage "was principally to strengthen his alliance against the king of France, otherwise he would never have done it, for the love he bore to the house of Lancaster." The establishment of Margaret as Duchess of Burgundy

gave a direction to the fortunes of William Caxton, and was in all likelihood the proximate cause that *he* was our first English printer.

Margaret Plantagenet was married to Charles of Burgundy at the city of Bruges, on the 3rd of July, 1468. We have the distinct evidence of Caxton that he was residing at Bruges some months previous to the marriage; that he had little to do; and that he employed his leisure in literary pursuits. In his 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye' it is stated in the title-page, "which said translation and work was begun in Bruges, in the county of Flanders, the first day of March, the year of the Incarnation a thousand, four hundred, sixty and eight." The prologue begins as follows:—"When I remember that every man is bounden by the commandment and counsel of the wise man to eschew sloth and idleness, which is mother and nourisher of vices, and ought to put myself unto virtuous occupation and business, then I, having no great charge or occupation, following the said counsel, took a French book and read therein many strange marvellous histories, wherein I had great pleasure and delight, as well for the novelty of the same, as for the fair language of the French, which was in prose so well and compendiously set and written, methought I understood the sentence and substance of every matter. And for so much as this book was new and late made and drawn into French, and never had seen it in our English tongue, I thought in myself it should be a good business to

translate it into our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume of England as in other lands, and also for to pass therewith the time, and thus concluded in myself to begin this said work, and forthwith took pen and ink, and began boldly to run forth, as blind Bayard, in this present work."

Philip de Comines, speaking of the prosperity of the people at the time of the accession of Charles, says, "The subjects of the house of Burgundy lived at that time in great plenty and prosperity, grew proud and wallowed in riches. . . . The expenses and habits both of women and men were great and extravagant; their entertainments and banquets more profuse and splendid than in any other place that I ever saw." The city of Bruges was then the great seat of this wealth and luxury. The Flemish nobles lived here in mansions of striking architecture, some traces of which still remain. The merchants vied with the nobles in tasteful magnificence. The canals of Bruges were crowded with boats laden with the richest treasures of distant lands. It was commerce that made the inhabitants of Bruges, of Ghent, and the other great Flemish towns so rich and powerful; and the same commerce was the encourager of art, which even at this early period displayed itself amongst a people naturally disposed for its cultivation. Charles the Rash destroyed much of this prosperity by his aptitude for war. But in the onset of his career he fought with all the pomp and

graces of the old chivalry, and his court was the seat of such romantic pageantries that John Paston, an Englishman who went over with Margaret of York, writes, "As for the duke's court, as for lords, ladies, and gentlewomen, knights, esquires, and gentlemen, I heard never of none like to it save King Arthur's court." It was here, without doubt, that William Caxton, the yeoman's son of the Weald of Kent, and afterwards the mercer's apprentice of the city of London, acquired that love for the literature of chivalry which he displays on many occasions in his office of translator and printer. Here he made acquaintances that led him to the study of the romance-writers, as for example of a worthy canon of whom he writes, "Oft times I have been excited of the venerable man Messire Henry Bolomyer canon of Lausanne, for to reduce for his pleasure some histories, as well in Latin and in romance as in other fashion written; that is to say, of the right puissant, virtuous, and noble Charles the Great, King of France and Emperor of Rome, son of the great Pepin, and of his princes and barons, as Rowland, Oliver, and other." His zeal for this species of literature left him not in his latest years: for in his translation of 'The Book of the Order of Chivalry,' which was printed by him about 1484, he rises into absolute eloquence in his address at the conclusion of the volume: "Oh, ye knights of England, where is the custom and usage of noble chivalry that was used in those days? What do ye now, but go to the baynes [baths] and

play at dice? And some, not well advised, use not honest and good rule, against all order of knighthood. Leave this, leave it! and read the noble volumes of St. Graal, of Lancelot, of Galaad, of Trystram, of Perse Forest, of Percyval, of Gawayn, and many more: there shall ye see manhood, courtesy, and gentleness. And look in latter days of the noble acts sith the Conquest, as in King Richard days Cœur de Lion, Edward I., and III. and his noble sons, Sir Robert Knolles, Sir John Hawkwode, Sir John Chandos, and Sir Gueltiare Manny. Read Froissart; and also behold that victorious and noble King Harry V., and the captains under him, his noble brethren the earls of Salisbury, Montagu, and many other, whose names shine gloriously by their virtuous noblesse and acts that they did in the honour of the order of chivalry. Alas, what do ye but sleep and take ease, and are all disordered from chivalry?" Caxton was dazzled, as many others were, with the bravery and the generosity of the chivalric character. He did not see the cruelty and pride, the oppression and injustice, that lurked beneath the glittering armour and the velvet mantle. Yet he was amongst those who first helped to destroy the gross inequality upon which chivalry was founded, by raising up the middle classes to the possession of knowledge. There were scenes transacting at Bruges, even at the very hour when Margaret of York came to give her hand to Charles of Burgundy, that must have shown him what

fearful passions were too often the companions of the courage and graces of knigthood.

At the midsummer of 1468 Bruges presented a scene of magnificence that was probably unequalled in those days of costly display. On the occasion of the approaching marriage, the nobility of Charles's extensive dominions arrived from every quarter. Ambassadors were there from all Christian powers. It looked like an occasion on which men should forget that there was such a thing as war in the world; and when despotism should put on its blandest smile and its most courteous reverence for all orders of men. The Duke of Burgundy anxiously desired the presence of the Count de St. Pôl, the great Constable of France. The constable arrived, surrounded with every pomp that his pride could devise,—with trumpets and banners, with pages on foot and crowds of horsemen, and a naked sword borne before him as the symbol of sovereignty. Charles was irritated beyond measure, and refused to receive the great lord, who from that hour became his deadliest enemy. But there was something more tragic to be enacted in the midst of a population looking only for high triumphs and royal pleasures. One of the chamberlains of the Duke of Burgundy was an illegitimate son of the Lord of Condé; he was very young, of exceeding beauty, and the most agreeable manners. He had fought by the side of the duke at the battle of Montlhéry, and was one of his most especial favourites. The youth, with that

ferocious self-abandonment which was not incompatible with the gentlest manners in courts and the noblest honours in camps, committed a murder under circumstances of extraordinary aggravation. He was playing at tennis, and, the fairness of a stroke being doubtful, a bystander was called upon to decide. Deciding against the Bastard of Condé, the young man swore that he would be revenged. The bystander, who was a canon of the church, fled to his home, and the furious youth pursued him. The canon escaped, but his brother encountered the madman. Some victim must be offered up to appease his selfish rage, and the brother was in his path. The wretched man fell on his knees, and, clasping his hands, begged for mercy. Those uplifted hands were cut off in an instant, and the sword that had been honourably drawn at Montlhéry, pierced the breast of an unoffending citizen. Such a murder could not pass unnoticed; and yet the young man's friends did not doubt that he would go unpunished, for he had committed the crime in his father's lordship. Such crimes were often committed with impunity by the great and the powerful; and even the commonalty were unprepared to expect any heavier punishment than a pecuniary recompense to the relations of the murdered man. The duke, however, had taken his determination. The Bastard of Condé was held in arrest at the house of the gatekeeper of the city of Bruges. Charles was solicited on every side for pardon, and even the relations of the deceased,

having been moved by suitable presents, supplicated his release; but the duke kept the matter in suspense till Bruges was filled with his subjects from every part of his dominions, and especially with the most powerful of his nobles. At the instant that he was ready to depart to meet the Lady Margaret at the neighbouring port of Ecluse, he commanded that the young man should be taken to the common prison, and the next morning led to execution. Even the magistrate of the city to whom this command was intrusted thought it impossible that the duke should execute one so highly connected, as if he were a common offender. The execution was delayed several hours by the magistrate in the hope that the duke would relent; but no respite came. The youth was carried through the city to the place of execution, amidst the tears of the people, who forgot his crime in his beauty. He was beheaded, and his body divided into four quarters. The Lord of Condé and his adherents left the city vowing vengeance. The nobles assembled felt themselves outraged by this exercise of absolute power. Even the citizens attributed the stern decree of the duke to his indomitable pride rather than to his love of justice. Such was the prelude to the bridal festivities of the court of Burgundy; of which one who wrote an especial description in Latin says, "The sun never shone upon a more splendid ceremony since the creation of the world."

There can be no doubt that Caxton was in the

direct employ of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. What he has told us himself of his position in her court is far more interesting than all the conjectures which his biographers have exercised upon the matter. He was in an honourable position, he was treated with confidence, he was grateful. We have already given an extract from the prologue to his 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' which shows when and under what circumstances he commenced the translation of that work. Remembering his simpleness and unperfectness in the French and English languages (which passage we have already noticed), he continues: "When all these things came before me, after that I had made and written five or six quires, I fell in despair of this work, and purposed no more to have continued therein, and the quires laid apart; and in two years after laboured no more at this work, and was fully in will to have left it. Till on a time it fortuned that the right high, excellent, and right virtuous princess, my right redoubted lady, my Lady Margaret"—and then he gives her a host of titles—"sent for me to speak with her good grace of divers matters, among the which I let her highness have knowledge of the aforesaid beginning of this work; which anon commanded me to shew the said five or six quires to her said grace. And when she had seen them, anon she found defaute [fault] in mine English, which she commanded me to amend, and moreover commanded me straightly [immediately] to continue and make an

end of the residue then not translated. Whose dreadful commandment I durst in no wise disobey, because I am a servant unto her said grace, and receive of her yearly fee, and other many good and great benefits, and also hope many more to receive of her highness; but forthwith went and laboured in the said translation after my simple and poor cunning, all so nigh as I can following mine author, meekly beseeching the bounteous highness of my said lady, that of her benevolence list to accept and take in gree [take kindly] this simple and rude work." The picture which Caxton thus presents to us of his showing his translation with an author's diffidence to the "dreadful" duchess, her criticism of his English, and her very flattering command that in spite of all its faults he should make an end of his work, is as interesting as Froissart's account of his literary recreations with Gaston de Foix:—"The acquaintance of him and of me was because I had brought with me a book, which I made at the contemplation of Winceslaus of Bohemia, Duke of Luxembourg and of Brabant, which work was called 'Meliador,' containing all the songs, ballads, rondeaux, and virelays which the gentle duke had made in this time, which by imagination I had gathered together; which book the Count of Foix was glad to see. And every night after supper I read therein to him; and while I read there was none durst speak any word, because he would I should be well understood, wherein he took great solace." In both cases the

men of letters were received on a free and familiar footing in the courtly circles. In the case of Caxton this was even more honourable to the Lady Margaret, than the welcome which Gaston de Foix gave to the accomplished knight Sir John Froissart. Caxton had no knightly honours to recommend him; he was a plain merchant: but he was unquestionably a man of modesty and intelligence; he had travelled much; he was familiar with the most popular literature of his day; and he desired to extend the knowledge of it by translations into his native language. It is difficult to say what was his exact employment in the court of the Lady Margaret. He was somewhat too old to partake of its light amusements, to mingle in its gallantries, or even to prompt my lady's fool with some word of wisdom. We have seen that four months before Margaret of York came to Bruges he had "no great charge or occupation," and he undertook the translation of a considerable work "for to pass therewith the time." It has, however, been maintained of late years, that Caxton was at this very time a printer. The question is a curious one, and we may bestow a little space upon its examination.

Mr. Hallam, in his 'Literature of Europe,' noticing the progress of printing, says that several books were printed in Paris in 1470 and 1471, adding, "But there seem to be unquestionable proofs that a still earlier specimen of typography is due to an English printer, the famous Caxton. His 'Recueil

des Histoires de Troye' appears to have been printed during the life of Philip, Duke of Burgundy, and consequently before June 15, 1467. The place of publication, certainly within the duke's dominions, has not been conjectured. It is, therefore, by several years the earliest printed book in the French language. A Latin speech by Russell, ambassador of Edward IV. to Charles of Burgundy, in 1469, is the next publication of Caxton. This was also printed in the Low Countries." The authority upon which the learned and accomplished historian of the Middle Ages relies for this statement is that of Mr. Dibdin, in his 'Typographical Antiquities.' The French edition of the 'Recueil des Histoires de Troye' bears no printer's name, date, or place. It purports to have been composed by Raoul le Fevre, chaplain to Duke Philip de Bourgoyne, in the year 1464. The evidence that this book was printed by Caxton was summed up by Mr. Bryant, and communicated by him to Mr. Herbert, the first editor of Ames's 'Typographical Antiquities.' The Rev. Mr. Dibdin, the second editor, says that these memoranda of Mr. Bryant's "clearly prove it to have been the production of Caxton." The argument rests upon these points: that the French and English editions of Le Fevre's work have an exact conformity and likeness throughout, for not only the page itself, but the number of lines in a page, the length, breadth, and intervals of the lines, are alike in both, and the letters, great and small, are of the same

magnitude. It corresponds too with 'The Game of the Chess,' printed by Caxton in England, in 1474. "These considerations," says Mr. Bryant, "settle who the printer was." We venture to doubt this. Mr. Bryant has himself shown how this resemblance might be produced between books printed by Caxton, and books supposed to be printed by him, without Caxton being the actual printer. "Mentz was taken by the Duke of Saxony in the year 1462, and most of the artificers employed by John Fust, the great inventor, were dispersed abroad. I make no doubt but Caxton, who was at no great distance from Mentz, took this opportunity of making himself a master of the mystery, which he had been at much trouble and expense to obtain. This I imagine he effected by taking into pay some of Fust's servants, and settling them for a time at Cologne. Of this number probably were Pinson and Rood, Mechlin, Lettou, and Wynkyn de Worde. With the help of some of these, he printed the book [which Wynkyn de Worde says Caxton printed] 'Bartholomeus de Prop. Rerum,' and the translation of the 'Recueil;' and probably many other books, which, being either in French or Latin, were not vendible in our country, and consequently no copies are extant here. Of all the books he printed in England, I do not remember above one in a foreign language." The calamity which drove the printers of Mentz from their homes, the storming of the city by Adolphus of Nassau, would naturally disperse their types, as well as break up

their workshops. The resemblance between the doubtful books, and books undoubtedly printed by Caxton, was the resemblance of types cast in the same matrices; the spaces between the lines, as well as the form and magnitude of the letters, were produced by the letters being cast in the same mould. The resemblance would have been equally produced whether the types were used by one and the same printer, or by two printers. The typographical antiquarians say that the same types are used in the French and English works of Le Fevre and in Caxton's 'Game of Chess;' and Mr. Herbert adds, that the types are the same as those used by Fust and Schoeffer, the partners of Guttenberg. If the resemblance of types were sufficient to determine the printer of two or more books, then Fust and Schoeffer ought to be called the printers of the French 'Recueil,' as well as of the English translation which Caxton says he printed at Cologne. There can be little doubt that, when Caxton went to Cologne to be a printer in 1471, he became possessed of the types and matrices with which he printed his translation of Le Fevre, and subsequently brought to England to print his 'Game of Chess.' Another printer might have preceded him in their possession, and might have received them direct from Fust and Schoeffer. When the art ceased to be a mystery, a profit might arise from selling the types or multiplying the matrices. Upon these considerations we wholly demur to the assertion, resting solely upon this

resemblance, that Caxton was a printer during the life of Philip le Bon. The belief is entirely opposed to his own statement, that shortly after the death of this prince he was completely at leisure, and set about a translation to while away his time. To be a printer in those days was a mighty undertaking. We shall subsequently see that he declares that he had practised and learnt the art at great charge and expense. It is wholly unlikely, also, that so gossiping a man, who makes a familiar friend of his readers, telling them of almost every circumstance that led to the printing of every book, that he in his translation should not have said one word of being the printer of the original work. The other book, the Latin speech by Russell, in 1469, which has been called the second publication of Caxton, is attributed to him absolutely upon no other grounds than the same resemblance of type. Assuredly we cannot receive the fact of resemblance as conclusive of Caxton being the printer either in this case or in that of the preceding. He tells us that in 1470 he was a servant receiving yearly fee from the Duchess of Burgundy, and completed an extensive work at her command, which he simply began "to eschew sloth and idleness," and to put himself "unto virtuous occupation and business." When he did fairly become a printer, he left sufficiently clear indications of his habitual industry. We have no question how he filled up his time when the press at Westminster was at work.

It was in the autumn of 1470, when Master William Caxton would appear to have been busily labouring in some silent turret of the palace at Bruges, upon his translation of Raoul le Fevre, that an event occurred, of all others the most calculated to spread consternation in the court of Burgundy, and to make the bold duke feel that in abandoning his family alliance with the house of Lancaster he had not done the politic thing which he anticipated. Edward IV., who had sat for some years with tolerable quiet upon the English throne, to which he had fought his way in many a battle-field with prodigious bravery, suddenly arrived at Bruges, in the October of 1470, a discrowned fugitive. He made his escape from the overwhelming inroad of the power of Warwick, "attended," says Comines, "by seven or eight hundred men without any clothes but what they were to have fought in, no money in their pockets, and not one in twenty of them knew whither they were going." He, the most beautiful man of the time, as Comines describes him,—who for twelve or thirteen years of prosperity had lived a life of the most luxurious gratification,—he arrived at Bruges, after being chased by privateers, and with difficulty rescued from their hands, so poor that he "was forced to give the master of the ship for his passage a gown lined with martens." At Bruges, then, did this fugitive remain nearly five months, when he again leaped into his throne, in the following April, with a triumphant boldness which has only one parallel

in modern history,—that of the march of Napoleon from Elba. In May, 1471, he addressed a letter in French to the nobles and burgomasters of Bruges, thanking them for the courtesy and hospitality he had received from them during his exile. Edward was of a sanguine temper; and, however depressed in fortune, was not likely, during those five months of humiliation, to have doubted that in good time he should regain the throne. He was of an easy and communicative disposition; and would naturally confer with his sister and her confidential servants upon his plans and prospects. Comines says, "King Edward told me that, in all the battles which he had gained, his way was, when the victory was on his side, to mount on horseback, and cry out to save the common soldiers, and put the gentry to the sword." We mention this to show that he was not indisposed to talk of himself and his doings with those whom he met during his exile. It is more than probable, then, that he had the same sort of free communication with his countryman Caxton. It was at this period that the progress of the art of printing must have been a subject of universal interest. The merchants of Bruges had commercial intercourse with all the countries of Europe; and they would naturally bring to the court of Burgundy some specimens of that art which was already beginning to create a new description of commerce. From Mentz, Bamberg, Cologne, Strasburg, and Augsburg, they would bring some of the Latin and German bibles

which, from 1461 to 1470, had issued from the presses of those cities. The presses of Italy, and especially of Rome, of Venice, and of Milan, had, during the same period, sent forth books, and more particularly classical works, in great abundance. The art had made such rapid progress in Italy, that in the first edition of St. Jerome's Epistles, printed in 1468, the Bishop of Aleria thus addresses Pope Paul II.: "It was reserved for the times of your holiness for the Christian world to be blessed with the immense advantages resulting from the art of printing; by means of which, and with a little money, the poorest person may collect together a few books. It is a small testimony of the glory of your holiness, that the volumes which formerly scarcely an hundred golden crowns would purchase may now be procured for twenty and less, and these well-written and authentic ones." It is pretty clear that Caxton, when he began his translation of the 'Histories of Troye,' had some larger circulation in view than could be obtained by the medium of transcription: "I thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume of England as in other lands." It is also probable that he was moving about in search of the best mode of printing it; for he says, at the end of the second book of the 'Recueil,' "And for as much as I suppose the said two books be not had before this time in our English language, therefore I had the better will

to accomplish the said work; which work was begun in Bruges, and continued in Gaunt [Ghent], and finished in Cologne, in time of the troublous world, and of the great divisions being and reigning as well in the royaumes of England and France as in all other places universally through the world, that is to wit, the year of our Lord one thousand, four hundred, and seventy-one." But he further says, with reference to his translation of the third book, which he doubted about doing, "because that I have now good leisure, being in Cologne, and have none other thing to do at this time in eschewing of idleness, mother of all vices, I have deliberated in myself of the contemplation of my said redoubted lady, to take this labour in hand." We shall presently see when Caxton became, or at any rate avowed himself to have become, a printer. Up to this point we see him only as a translator, a man of leisure, and not one learning a new and difficult craft. But we see him moving about from Bruges to Ghent, from Ghent to Cologne, without any distinct or specified object. There can be little doubt, we believe, that he was endeavouring to make himself acquainted with the new art, still in great measure a secret art, the masters of which required to be approached with considerable caution. That the presence of Edward IV. in Flanders, during a period when Caxton might readily have had access to his person, might have led him to believe that the time would come when, under the patronage of the restored prince, he might carry

the art to London, is not an improbable conjecture. Amongst the companions of Edward's exile was his brother-in-law, the celebrated Lord Rivers. This brave and accomplished young nobleman subsequently translated a book called 'The Dictes and Sayings of Philosophers,' which Caxton printed at Westminster, in 1477. The printer has added an appendix to this translation, from which we collect that the noble author and his literary printer were upon terms of mutual confidence and regard: "At such time as he had accomplished this said work, it liked him to send it to me in certain quires to oversee. . . . . And so afterward I came unto my said lord, and told him how I had read and seen his book, and that he had done a meritorious deed in the labour of the translation thereof. . . . . Then my said lord desired me to oversee it, and, where as I should find fault, to correct it, wherein I answered unto his lordship that I could not amend it. . . . . Notwithstanding he willed me to oversee it." Earl Rivers, then Lord Scales, was also at Bruges upon the occasion of the Lady Margaret's marriage. Employed, therefore, by the Duchess of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV., and honoured with the confidence of Earl Rivers, his brother-in-law, we may reasonably believe that the presence of Edward at Bruges in 1470-71 might have had some influence upon the determination of Caxton to learn and practise the new art of printing, and to carry it into England, if the "troublous times" could afford him occasion. We

have distinct evidence that Edward IV. gave a marked encouragement to the labours of Caxton as a translator, in a book printed by him without any date, 'The Life of Jason,' written, as were the 'Histories of Troy,' by Raoul le Fevre, in which Caxton says in his prologue, "For as much as late by the commandment of the right high and noble princess my Lady Margaret, &c., I translated a book out of French into English, named 'Recueil,' &c. . . . . Therefore, under the protection and sufferance of the most high, puissant, and Christian king, my most dread natural liege, Lord Edward, &c., I intend to translate the said book of the 'Histories of Jason.'" The expression "for as much as late by the commandment, &c.," brings the date of the 'Histories of Jason' close to that of the 'Histories of Troy,' and points out the probability that the protection and sufferance of Edward was afforded to Caxton when the king was a fugitive at the court of Burgundy. In the 'Issues of the Exchequer,' there is the following entry of a payment on the 15th of June, in the 19th of Edward IV., "To William Caxton, in money paid to his own hands, in discharge of twenty pounds which the lord the king commanded to be paid to the same William for certain causes and matters performed by him for the said lord the king." This is eight years after the period of Edward's exile, being in 1479. But as the productions of Caxton's press were very prolific at this time, we may believe that the payment of such a large sum for certain

causes and matters performed for the king was in some degree connected with his labours in the introduction of printing into England,—a payment not improbably postponed for obligations incurred, and promises granted, at an earlier period.

CHAPTER V.

Rapidity of Printing — Who the first English Printer — Caxton the first English Printer — First English Printed Book — Difficulties of the first Printers — Ancient Bookbinding — The Printer a Publisher — Conditions of Cheapness in Books.

AT the end of the third book of Caxton's translation of the 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' which we have so often quoted, is the following most curious passage: "Thus end I this book, which I have translated after mine author, as nigh as God hath given me cunning, to whom be given the laud and praises. And for as much as in the writing of the same my pen is worn, mine hand weary and not stedfast, mine eyen dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper, and my courage not so prone and ready to labour as it hath been, and that age creepeth on me daily and feebleth all the body; and also because I have promised to divers gentlemen and to my friends to address to them as hastily as I might this said book, therefore I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense [expense], to ordain this said book in print, after the manner and form as you may here see; and is not written with pen and ink as other books are, to the end that every man may have them at once. For all the books of this story named the 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' thus imprinted as ye here see, were be-

•gun in one day, and also finished in one day. Which book I presented to my said redoubted lady as afore is said, and she hath well accepted it and largely rewarded me." It was customary for the first printers, which is not according to the belief that they wanted to palm their printed books off as manuscripts, to state that they were not drawn or written with a pen and ink. Udalricus Gallus, who printed at Rome about 1470, says, "I, Udalricus Gallus, without pen or pencil have imprinted this book." But he further says of himself at the end of one of his books,—"I printed thus much in a day; it is not written in a year." It has been held that Caxton uses a purely marvellous and hyperbolical mode of expression, when he says, "All the books of this story, thus imprinted as ye here see, were begun in one day and finished in one day." Dr. Dibdin inquires what Caxton meant "by saying that the book was begun and finished in one day? Did he wish his countrymen to believe that the translation of Le Fevre's book was absolutely printed in twenty-four hours?" Dr. Dibdin truly holds the thing to be impracticable, because the book consisted of seven hundred and seventy-eight folio pages. Such feats have been done with the large capital and division of labour of modern times; but to begin and finish such a book in one day in the fifteenth century was certainly an impossibility. We venture to think that Caxton says nothing of the sort. He puts with great force and justice the chief advantages of

printing,—the rapidity with which many copies could be produced at once. He promised, he says, to divers gentlemen and friends to address to them as hastily as he might this book. There were many who wanted the book. The transcribers could not supply their wants. He could not multiply copies himself with his pen, for his hand was weary and his eyes dim. He learned, therefore, to ordain the book in print, to the end that all his friends might have the books at the same time,—that every man might have them at once; and to explain this, he says, all the books thus imprinted were begun in one day. If he printed a hundred copies, each of the hundred copies was begun at the same time; a hundred sheets, each sheet forming a portion of each copy, were printed off in one day,—and in the same way were they also finished in one day. He does not say, as Dr. Dibdin interprets the passage, that *the book* was begun and finished in one day,—one and the same day,—but that *all* the books were begun on one day, and all the books were finished on another day. His expression is not very clear, but his meaning is quite apparent. This was the end that he sought to obtain at great charge and expense; this is the end which has been more and more obtained at every step forward in the art of printing,—the rapid multiplication of copies, so that all men may have them at once.

The place where Caxton learned the art of printing, and the persons of whom he first learned

it, are not shown in any of his voluminous prologues and prefaces. But an extraordinary statement was published in the year 1664, by a person of the name of Richard Atkyns, who sought to prove that printing was a royal prerogative, because, as he says, the art was first brought into England at the cost of the crown. His narrative is held to be altogether a fiction; for the document upon which he rests it was never forthcoming, and no person has ever testified to the knowledge of it, except Richard Atkyns himself, who laboured hard to obtain a patent from the crown for the sole printing of law-books, upon the ground which he attempts to take of the crown having brought printing into England. "Thomas Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, moved the then king, Henry VI., to use all possible means for procuring a printing-mould, for so it was then called, to be brought into this kingdom. The king, a good man, and much given to works of this nature, readily hearkened to the motion; and taking private advice how to effect this design, concluded it could not be brought about without great secrecy, and a considerable sum of money given to such person or persons as would draw off some of the workmen from Haarlem in Holland, where John Guttenberg had newly invented it, and was himself personally at work. It was resolved that less than one thousand marks would not produce the desired effect: towards which sum the said archbishop presented the king with three hundred marks. The money being

now prepared, the management of the design was committed to Mr. Robert Turnour, who then was keeper of the robes to the king, and a person most in favour with him of any of his condition. Mr. Turnour took to his assistance Mr. Caxton, a citizen of good abilities, who, trading much into Holland, might be a creditable pretence, as well for his going as staying in the Low Countries. Mr. Turnour was in disguise, his beard and hair shaven quite off, but Mr. Caxton appeared known and public. They having received the sum of one thousand marks, went first to Amsterdam, then to Leyden, not daring to enter Haarlem itself; for the town was very jealous, having imprisoned and apprehended divers persons, who came from other parts for the same purpose. They stayed till they had spent the whole one thousand marks in gifts and expenses. So as the king was fain to send five hundred marks more, Mr. Turnour having written to the king that he had almost done his work, a bargain, as he said, being struck between him and two Hollanders for bringing off one of the workmen, who should sufficiently discover and teach the new art. At last, with much ado, they got off one of the under workmen, whose name was Frederick Corsells, or rather Corsellis; who late one night stole from his fellows in disguise, into a vessel prepared before for that purpose; and so the wind, favouring the design, brought him safe to London. It was not thought so prudent to set him on work at London, but by the archbishop's means, who

had been Vice-chancellor and afterwards Chancellor of the University of Oxon, Corsellis was carried with a guard to Oxon, which constantly watched to prevent Corsellis from any possible escape, till he had made good his promise, in teaching how to print. So that at Oxford printing was first set up in England." This is certainly an extraordinary story, and one which upon the face of it has traces of inconsistency, if not of imposture. Richard Atkyns says that a certain worthy person "did present me with a copy of a record and manuscript in Lambeth House, heretofore in his custody, belonging to the See, and not to any particular Archbishop of Canterbury. The substance whereof was this; though I hope, for public satisfaction, the record itself in its due time will appear." The record itself did never appear, and, though diligently sought for, could never be found. But Atkyns further stated that the same most worthy person who gave him the copy of the record, trusted him with a book "printed at Oxon, A.D. 1468, which was three years before any of the recited authors [Stow and others] would allow it [printing] to be in England." He does not mention the book; but there is such a book, and it is entitled 'Expositio Sancti Ieronimi in Simbolum, ad Papam Laurentiam;' and at the end, 'Explicit Expositio, &c., Impressa Oxonie, et finita Anno Dom. MCCCCLXVIII, xvii die Decembris.' Anthony Wood repeats the story of Atkyns in his 'History of the University of Oxford;' and he adds, "And thus the mystery

of printing appeared ten years sooner in the University of Oxford than at any other place in Europe, Haarlem and Mentz excepted. Not long after there were presses set up in Westminster, St. Albans, Worcester, and other monasteries of note. After this manner printing was introduced into England, by the care of Archbishop Bourchier, in the year of Christ 1464, and the third of King Edward IV." Wood's version of the story makes it a little, a very little, more credible, for it brings it nearer to the time when the newly discovered art of printing might have attracted some attention in England. But even in 1464 there were, with scarcely more than one exception, no printed books known in Europe but the first productions of the press at Mentz. The story of Caxton going to Haarlem in the time of Henry the Sixth, that is, in some year previous to 1461, must altogether be a fabrication, or a mistake. The accounts that would ascribe the invention of printing to Laurence Coster, of Haarlem, set up a legendary story that John Fust, or John Guttenberg (not the real Guttenberg, but an elder brother), stole the invention from Coster and carried it to Mentz in 1442. If Caxton, therefore, went to Haarlem in Holland, with a companion, in disguise, to learn the art of printing, he must have gone there before 1442; for the story holds that Coster was not only robbed of his secret, but of his types, and gave up printing in despair to his more fortunate spoiler. Bourchier was not Archbishop of Canterbury till 1454. We

may be sure, therefore, that, wherever Caxton went to learn the art of printing at an earlier period than is generally supposed, he did not go to Haarlem in Holland. Substitute Mentz for Haarlem, and Atkyns's story is more consistent. It is by no means improbable that Henry the Sixth and Cardinal Bourchier might have seen the magnificent Latin bible, called the Mazarine bible, which was printed by Guttenberg, Schoeffer, and Fust, and is held to have appeared about 1455. Of this noble book Mr. Hallam says, "It is a very striking circumstance, that the high-minded inventors of this great art tried at the very outset so bold a flight as the printing an entire bible, and executed it with astonishing success. It was Minerva leaping on earth in her divine strength and radiant armour, ready at the moment of her nativity to subdue and destroy her enemies." The king and the archbishop might have desired that England should learn the art of executing so splendid a work as the first bible. At that period we know that Caxton was residing abroad, and he was a fit person to be selected for such a commission. But kings at that day were scarcely better supplied with money than their subjects; and if Henry the Sixth had sent to Mr. Robert Turnour or Mr. William Caxton seven hundred marks at one time and five hundred at another, the gifts must have been registered with all due formality. We have the Exchequer registers of Henry the Sixth and his great rival; and although we learn that Edward

the Fourth gave Caxton twenty pounds, neither his name nor that of Mr. Turnour, nor even of the archbishop, is associated with any bounty of Henry the Sixth. We may, therefore, safely conclude, with Dr. Conyers Middleton, with regard to all this story, that "Mr. Atkyns, a bold vain man, might be the inventor of it, having an interest in imposing upon the world, to confirm his argument that printing was of the prerogative royal, in opposition to the stationers; against whom he was engaged in expensive lawsuits, in defence of the king's patents, under which he claimed some exclusive powers of printing." The date of 1468 on the Oxford book is reasonably concluded to have been a typographical error. There are niceties in the printing of that book which did not belong to the earliest stages of the art; and the same type and manner of printing are seen in Oxford books printed immediately after 1478. The probability therefore is, that an X was omitted in the Roman numerals.

We could scarcely avoid detailing this story, apocryphal as the whole matter is upon the face of it, because the claims of Oxford to the honour of the first printing-press were once the subject of a fierce controversy. The honest antiquarian Oldys complains most bitterly of Richard Atkyns, "How unwarrantably he robbed Master Caxton of the honour, wherewith he had long been, by the suffrage of all learned men, undeniably invested, of first introducing and practising this most scien-

tifical invention among us." But had this story been true, Caxton would not have been robbed of his glory. He would still have been what Leland, writing within half a century of his death, calls him, "Angliæ Prototypographus"—the first printer of England. For it is not the man who is the accidental instrument of introducing a great invention, and then pursues it no further, who is to have the fame of its promulgation. It is he who by patient and assiduous labour acquires the mastery of a new principle, sees afar off the high objects to which it may be applied, carries out its details with persevering courage, is not deterred by failure nor satisfied with partial success, works for a great purpose through long years of anxiety, is careless of honours or rewards, and finally does accomplish all and much more than he proposed, planting the tree, training it, rejoicing in its good fruit,—he it is that is the real first introducer and practiser of a great scientific invention, even though some one may have preceded him in some similar attempt—an experiment, but not a perfect work. We may well believe that, for some ten years of his residence abroad, the knowledge that a new art was discovered, promising such mighty results as that of printing, must have excited the deepest interest in the mind of Caxton. He says himself, in his continuation of the Polychronicon, "About this time [1455] the craft of imprinting was first found in Mogunce in Almayne." During his residence at the court of Burgundy he would see the art multi-

plying around him. Italy, where it most extensively flourished before 1470, was too distant for his personal inspection. Bamberg, Augsburg, and Strasburg brought it nearer to him. But Cologne, where Conrad Winters set up a press about 1470, was very near at hand. A few days' journey would place him within the walls of the holy city of the Rhine. Cologne, we have no doubt, fixed the employment of the remainder of his life; and made the London mercer, whose name, like the names of many other good and respectable men, would have held no place in the memory of the world but for the art he learnt in his latter years,—Cologne rendered the name of Caxton a bright and venerable name;—a name that even his countrymen, who are accustomed chiefly to raise columns and statues to the warlike defenders of their country, will one day honour amongst the heroes who have most successfully cultivated the arts of peace, and by high talent and patient labour have rendered it impossible that mankind should not steadily advance in the acquisition of knowledge and virtue, and in the consequent amelioration of the lot of every member of the family of mankind, at some period, present or remote.

The provost of the city of Mentz, on the occasion of the festival of Guttenberg, published an address full of German enthusiasm, at which we may be apt to smile, but which breathes a spirit of reverence for the higher concerns of our being which we might profitably engraft upon the practical

good sense on which we pride ourselves. He says, "If the mortal who invented that method of fixing the fugitive sounds of words which we call the alphabet has operated upon mankind like a divinity, so also has Guttenberg's genius brought together the once isolated inquirers, teachers, and learners—all the scattered and divided efforts for extending God's kingdom over the whole civilized earth—as though beneath one temple. Guttenberg's invention, not a lucky accident, but the golden fruit of a well-considered idea—an invention made with a perfect consciousness of its end—has above all other causes, for more than four centuries, urged forward and established the dominion of science; and what is of the most importance, has immeasurably advanced the mental formation and education of the people. This invention, a true intellectual sun, has mounted above the horizon, first of the European Christians, and then of the people of other climes and other faiths, to an ever-enduring morning. It has made the return of barbarism, the isolation of mankind, the reign of darkness, impossible for all future times. It has established a public opinion, a court of moral judicature common to all civilized nations, whatever natural divisions may separate them, as much as for the provinces of one and the same state. In a word, it has formed fellow labourers at the never-resting loom of Christian European civilization in every quarter of the world, in almost every island of the ocean."

Filled with some such strong belief, although perhaps a vague belief, of the blessings which printing might bestow upon his own country, we may view William Caxton proceeding, about the end of 1470, to the city of Cologne, resolved to acquire the art of which he had seen some of the effects, without stint of labour or expense. That he was an apt and diligent scholar his after works abundantly prove.

The first book printed in the English language, the 'Recueil of the Histories of Troy,' which we have so often noticed, does not bear upon the face of it when and where it was printed. That it was printed by Caxton we can have no doubt, because he says, "I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense, to ordain this said book in print." He tells us, too, in the title-page, that the *translation* was finished at Cologne, in September, 1471. That Caxton printed at Cologne we have tolerably clear evidence. There is a most curious book of Natural History, originally written in Latin by Bartholomew Glanvill, a Franciscan friar of the fourteenth century, commonly known as Bartholomæus. A translation of this book, which is called 'De Proprietatibus Rerum,' was printed in England by Wynkyn de Worde, who was an assistant to Caxton in his printing-office at Westminster, and there succeeded to him. In some quaint stanzas which occur in this edition, and which appear to be written either by or in the name of the printer, are these lines, which we

copy, in the first instance, exactly following the orthography and non-punctuation of the original :—

> " And also of your charyte call to remembraunce
> The soule of William Caxton first prȳter of this boke
> Jn laten tonge at Coleyn bȳself to anaũce
> That euery well disposyd man may theron loke."

That we are asked to call to remembrance the soul of William Caxton is perfectly clear; but how are we to read the subsequent members of the sentence? The most obvious meaning appears to be that William Caxton was the first printer of this book in the Latin tongue; that he printed it at Cologne; and that his object in printing it was to advance or profit himself, in addition to his desire that every well-disposed man might look upon it. But there is another interpretation of these words, which is certainly not a forced one;—that William Caxton was the first printer of this book, the English book, and that the object of his printing it was to advance himself in the Latin tongue at Cologne. "This book" would appear then to be, this English book, this same book. If a copy of this book, whether in Latin or English, printed at Cologne at so early a period, could be found, the question would be set at rest. There is a Latin edition printed at Cologne, in 1481, by John Koelhoff; and there is an edition in Latin without date or place. The first English edition known is that by Wynkyn de Worde, and that translation was made much earlier than the time of Caxton, by John de Trevisa. Caxton could scarcely have been said to

have desired to have advanced himself in the Latin tongue, unless he had translated the book as well as printed it. The mere fact of superintending workmen who set up the types in Latin would have done little to advance his knowledge of the language. We believe, therefore, that we must receive the obscure lines of Wynkyn de Worde as evidence that Caxton did print at Cologne, and that he undertook the Latin edition of Bartholomæus as a commercial speculation, "himself to advance," or profit.

And, indeed, when we look at the state of England after the return of Edward IV. from his exile, —the "great divisions" of which Caxton himself speaks,—we may consider that he acted with discretion in conducting his first printing operations in a German city. It must be also borne in mind that this was by far the readiest mode to obtain a competent knowledge in the new art. Had he come over to England with types and presses, and even with the most skilful workmen, the probability is that the man of letters who, two or three years before, had little or nothing to do in his attendance upon the Burgundian court, would have ill succeeded in so complicated and difficult a commercial enterprise. Lambinet, a French bibliographical writer, tells us that Melchior de Stamham, wishing to establish a printing-office at Augsburg, engaged a skilful workman of the same town, of the name of Sauerloch. He employed a whole year in making the necessary preparations for his office. He

bought five presses, of the materials of which he constructed five other presses. He cast pewter types, and, having spent a large sum, seven hundred and two florins, in establishing his office, began working in 1473. He died before he had completed one book; heartbroken, probably, at the amount of capital he had sunk; for his unfinished book was sold off at a mere trifle, and his office broken up. This statement, which rests upon some ancient testimony, shows us something of the difficulties which had to be encountered by the early printers. They had to do everything for themselves; to construct the materials of their art, types, presses, and every other instrument and appliance. When Caxton began to print at Cologne, he probably had the means of obtaining a set of moulds from some previous printer,—what are called strikes from the punches that form the original matrices. The writers upon typography seem to assume the necessity of every one of the old printers cutting his punches anew, and shaping his letters according to his own notions of proportionate beauty. That the great masters of their art, the first inventors, the Italian printers, the Alduses, the Stephenses, pursued this course is perfectly clear. But when printing ceased to be a mystery, about 1462, it is more than probable that those who tried to set up a press, especially in Germany, either bought a few types of the more established printers, or obtained a readier means of casting types than that of cutting new punches,—

a difficult and expensive operation. Thus we believe the attempts to assign a book without a printer's name to some printer whose types that book resembles, can be little relied upon. Caxton's types are held to be like the type of this printer and the type of that; and it is said that he copied the types, with the objection added that he did not copy the best models. What should have prevented him buying the types from the continent, as every English printer did until the middle of the last century? or at any rate what should have prevented him buying copies of the moulds which other printers were using? The bas-relief upon Thorwaldsen's statue of Guttenberg exhibits the first printer examining a matrix. But all the difficulties in the formation of the first matrix overcome, we may readily see that, at every stage, the art of making fusile types would become easier and simpler, till at length the division of labour should be perfectly applied to type-making, and the mere casting of a letter, as each letter is cast singly, exhibit one of the most rapid and beautiful pieces of handiwork that the arts can show.

But the type obtained, Caxton would still have much to do before his office was furnished. We have seen how Melchior of Augsburg set about getting his presses: "He bought of John Schuesseler five presses, which cost him seventy-three Rhenish florins: he constructed with these materials five other smaller presses." To those who know what a well-adjusted machine the commonest

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printing-press now in use is, it is not easy at first to conceive what is meant by saying that Melchior bought five presses, and made five other presses out of the materials. The solution is this:—in all probability this printer of Augsburg bought five old wine-presses, and, using the screws, cut them down and adapted them to the special purpose for which he designed them. The earliest printing-press was nothing more than a common screw-press,—such as a cheese-press, or a napkin-press,—with a contrivance for running the *form* of types under the screw after the *form* was inked. It is evident that this mode of obtaining an impression must have been very laborious and very slow. As the screw must have come down upon the types with a dead pull,—that is, as the table upon which the types were placed was solid and unyielding,—great care must have been required to prevent the pressure being so hard as to injure the face of the letters.

A famous printer, Jodocus Badius Ascensianus, has exhibited his press in the title-page of a book printed by him in 1498. Up to the middle of the last century this rude press was in use in England; although the press of an ingenious Dutch mechanic, Blaew,—in which the pressure was rapidly communicated from the screw to the types, and all the parts of the press were yielding so as to produce a sharp but not a crushing impression,—was gradually superseding it. The early printers manufactured their own ink, so that Caxton had to learn the art of ink-making. The ink was applied to the types

by balls, or dabbers, such as one of the men holds who is working the press of Badius. Such dabbers were universally used in printing forty years ago. As the ancient weaver was expected to make his own loom, so, even this short time since, the division of labour was so imperfectly applied to printing, that the pressman was expected to make his own balls. A very rude and nasty process this was. The sheepskins, called pelts, were prepared in the printing-office, where the wool with which they were stuffed was also carded; and these balls, thus manufactured by a man whose general work was entirely of a different nature, required the expenditure of at least half an hour's labour every day in a very disagreeable operation, by which they were kept soft.

There were many other little niceties in the home construction of the materials for printing which Caxton would necessarily have to learn. But in the earlier stages of an art requiring such nice arrangement, both in the departments of the compositor, or setter-up of the type, and of the pressman, it is quite clear that many things which, by the habit of four centuries, have become familiar and easy in a printing-office, would be exceedingly difficult to be acquired by the first printers. Rapidity in the work was probably out of the question. Accidents must constantly have occurred in wedging up the single letters tightly in pages and sheets; and when one looks at the regularity of the inking of these old books, and the beautiful accuracy with

which the line on one side of a page falls on the corresponding line on the other side (called by printers "register"), we may be sure that with very imperfect mechanical means an amount of care was taken in working off the sheets which would appear ludicrous to a modern pressman. The higher



Ancient Press.

operation of a printing-office, which consists in reading the proofs, must have been in the first instance full of embarrassment and difficulty. A scholar was doubtless employed to test the accuracy

of the proofs; probably some one who had been previously employed to overlook the labours of the transcribers. Fierce must have been the indignation of such a one during a course of painful experience, when he found one letter presented for another, letters and even syllables and words omitted, letters topsy-turvy, and even actual substitutions of one word for another. These are almost unavoidable consequences of the mechanical operation of arranging moveable types, so entirely different from the work of the transcriber. The corrector of the press would not understand this; and his life would not be a pleasant one. Caxton was no doubt the corrector of his own press; and well for him it was that he brought to his task the patience, industry, and good temper which are manifest in his writings.

But the ancient printer had something more to do before his manufacture was complete. He was a bookbinder as well as a printer. The ancient books, manuscript as well as printed, were wonderful specimens of patient labour. The board, literally a wooden board, between which the leaves were fastened, was as thick as the panel of a door. This was covered with leather, sometimes embossed with the most ingenious devices. There were large brass nails, with ornamented heads, on the outside of this cover, with magnificent corners to the lids. In addition, there were clasps. The back was rendered solid with paste and glue, so as to last for centuries. Erasmus says of such a book, "As for

Thomas Aquinas's Secunda Secundæ, no man can carry it about, much less get it into his head." An ancient woodcut shows us the binder hammering at the leaves to make them flat, and a lad sewing the leaves in a frame very like that still in use. Above are the books flying in the air in all their solid glory.

'But the most difficult labour of the ancient printer, and that which would necessarily constitute the great distinction between one printer and another, was yet to come. He had to sell his books when he had manufactured them, for there was no division of the labour of publisher and printer in those days. His success would of course much depend upon the quality of his books; upon their adaptation to the nature of the demand for books; upon their accuracy; upon their approach to the beauty of the old manuscripts. But he had to incur the risk common to all copying processes, whether the thing produced be a medal or a book, of expending a large certain sum before a single copy could be produced. The process of printing, compared with that of writing, is a cheap process as ordinarily conducted; but the condition of cheapness is this,—that a sufficient number of copies of any particular book may be reckoned upon as saleable, so as to render the proportion of the first expense upon a single copy inconsiderable. If it were required even at the present time to print a single copy, or even three or four copies only, of any literary work, the cost of printing

would be greater than the cost of transcribing. It is when hundreds, and especially thousands, of the same work are demanded, that the great value of the printing-press in making knowledge cheap is particularly shown. It is probable that the first printers did not take off more than two or three hundred, if so many, of their works; and, therefore, the earliest printed books must have been still dear, on account of the limited number of their readers. Caxton, as it appears by a passage in one of his books, was a cautious printer; and required something like an assurance that he should sell enough of any particular book to repay the cost of producing it. In his 'Legend of Saints' he says, "I have submysed [submitted] myself to translate into English the 'Legend of Saints,' called 'Legenda aurea' in Latin; and William, Earl of Arundel, desired me—and promised to take a reasonable quantity of them—and sent me a worshipful gentleman, promising that my said lord should during my life give and grant to me a yearly fee, that is to note, a buck in summer and a doe in winter." Caxton, with his sale of a reasonable quantity, and his summer and winter venison, was more fortunate than others of his brethren, who speculated upon a public demand for books without any guarantee from the great and wealthy. Sweynheim and Pannartz, Germans who settled in Rome, and there printed many beautiful editions of the Latin Classics, presented a petition to the Pope, in 1471, which contains the following pas-

sage :—"We were the first of the Germans who introduced this art, with vast labour and cost, into your holiness' territories, in the time of your predecessor; and encouraged by our example other printers to do the same. If you peruse the catalogue of the works printed by us, you will admire how and where we could procure a sufficient quantity of paper, or even rags, for such a number of volumes. The total of these books amounts to 12,475,—a prodigious heap, and intolerable to us, your holiness' printers, by reason of those unsold. We are no longer able to bear the great expense of housekeeping, for want of buyers; of which there cannot be a more flagrant proof than that our house, though otherwise spacious enough, is full of quire-books, but void of every necessary of life." For some years after the invention of printing, many of the ingenious, learned, and enterprising men who devoted themselves to the new art which was to change the face of society, were ruined, because they could not sell cheaply unless they printed a considerable number of a book; and there were not readers enough to take off the stock which they thus accumulated. In time, however, as the facilities for acquiring knowledge which printing afforded created many readers, the trade of printing books became one of less general risk; and dealers in literature could afford more and more to dispense with individual patronage, and rely upon the public demand.

CHAPTER VI.

The Press at Westminster — Theological Books — Character of Caxton's Press — The Troy Book — The Game of the Chess.

THE indications of the period at which Caxton first brought the art of printing into England are not very exact. Several of his books, supposed to have been amongst the earliest, are without date or place of impression. The first in the title of which a date or a place is mentioned is 'The Dictes and Sayinges of Philosophres,' translated by the Earl of Rivers from the French. This bears upon the title "Enprynted by me William Caxton, at Westminster, the yere of our Lord M.CCCC. lxxvij." Another imprint, three years later, is more precise. It is in the 'Chronicles of Englond,' which book the printer says was "Enprynted by me, William Caxton, in thabbey of Westmynstre by london, &c., the v day of Juyn, the yere of thincarnacion of our lord god M.CCCC. lxxx." In 1485, 'A Book of the Noble Hystoryes of Kynge Arthur,' was "by me deuyded into xxi bookes chapytred and enprynted and fynysshed, in thabbey Westmestre." The expression "in the Abbey of Westminster" leaves no doubt that beneath the actual roof of some portion of the abbey Caxton carried on his art. Stow, in his 'Survey of London,' says, "In the

Eleemosynary or Almonry at Westminster Abbey, now corruptly called the Ambry, for that the alms of the abbey were there distributed to the poor, John Islip, Abbot of Westminster, erected the first press of book-printing that ever was in England, and Caxton was the first that practised it in the said abbey." The careful historian of London here committed one error; John Islip did not become Abbot of Westminster till 1500. John Esteney was made abbot in 1474, and remained such until his death in 1498. His predecessor was Thomas Milling. In Dugdale's 'Monasticon' we find, speaking of Esteney, "It was in this abbot's time, and not in that of Milling, or in that of Abbot Islip, that Caxton exercised the art of printing at Westminster. He is said to have erected his office in one of the side chapels of the abbey, supposed by some of our historians to have been the Ambry or Eleemosynary." Oldys says, "Whoever authorized Caxton, it is certain that he did there, at the entrance of the abbey, exercise the art, from whence a printing-room is to this day called a chapel." When we consider the large extent of building that formed a portion of the abbey of Westminster, before the house was shorn of its splendour by Henry the Eighth, we may readily believe that Caxton might have been accommodated in a less sacred and indeed less public place than a side chapel of the present church. There were buildings attached to that church which were removed to make room for the

Chapel of Henry the Seventh. It has been conjectured that the ancient Scriptorium of the Abbey, the place where books were transcribed, might have been assigned to Caxton, to carry on an art which was fast superseding that of the transcriber. Nor are there wanting other examples of the encouragement afforded to printing by great religious societies. As early as 1480, books were printed at St. Alban's; and in 1525 there was a translation of Boetius printed in the monastery of Tavistock, by Dan Thomas Richards, monk of the same monastery. That the intercourse of Caxton with the Abbot of Westminster was on a familiar footing we learn from his own statement, in 1490: "My Lord Abbot of Westminster did shew to me late certain evidences written in Old English, for to reduce it into our English now used."

Setting up his press in this sacred place, it is somewhat remarkable how few of Caxton's books are distinctly of a religious character.* Not more than five or six can be held strictly to pertain to theological subjects. Bibles he could not print, as we shall presently notice.

There is no breviary or book of prayers found to have issued from his press. The only book distinctly connected with the Church is 'Liber Festivalis,' or Directions for keeping Feasts all the year. It is highly probable that many of such books have perished. But what furnishes a curious example of the accidents by which the smallest things

* See the list in Appendix.

may be preserved, there is now existing, preserved in Mr. Douce's collection in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, a handbill, precisely such as a publisher of the present day might distribute, printed in Caxton's largest type, inviting the people to come to his office and buy a certain book regulating the church service. "If it plese any man spirituel or temporel to bye ony Pyes of two and thre comemoracions of Salisburi vse enprynted after the forme of this present lettre whiche ben wel and truly correct, late hym come to Westmonester into the Almonesrye at the reed pale and he shal have them good chepe. Supplico stet cedula." The preface to the present Liturgy of the Church of England explains what a Pye was: "The number and hardness of the rules called the Pie, and the manifold changings of the service, was the cause, that to turn the book only was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out." It is a curious fact that printers even at the present day call a confused heap of types Pie; and whilst no one has attempted to explain the origin of the word, we may venture to suggest that the intricacy of this Romish ordinal might lead the printers to call a mass of confused and deranged letters by a familiar expression of contempt derived from the Pie which they or their predecessors in the art had been accustomed to work upon.

Sir Thomas More has clearly shown the reason

why Caxton could not venture to print a Bible, although the people would have greedily bought Wickliff's translation. There were translations of the Bible before Wickliff, and that translation which goes by the name of this great reformer was probably made up in some degree from those previous translations. Wickliff's translation was interdicted, and thus More says, "On account of the penalties ordered by Archbishop Arundel's constitution, though the old translations that were before Wickliff's days remained lawful and were in some folks' hands had and read, yet he thought no printer would lightly be so hot to put any bible in print at his own charge—and then hang upon a doubtful trial whether the first copy of his translation was made before Wickliff's days or since. For if it were made since, it must be approved before the printing." This was a dilemma that Caxton would have been too prudent to encounter.

In the books printed by Caxton which treat of secular subjects, there is constant evidence of the sincere and unpretending piety of this skilful and laborious author and artisan. He lived in an age when the ancient power of the church was somewhat waning; and far-sighted observers saw the cloud no bigger than a man's hand which indicated the approaching storm. One of his biographers, the Rev. Mr. Lewis, says of him that "he expressed a great sense of religion, and wrote like one who lived in the fear of God, and was very desirous of promoting his honour and glory." It was in this

spirit that he desired the religious teaching of the people not to be formal and pedantic. The Preface to '*The Doctrinal of Sapyence*,' which was translated out of French into English by Caxton, contains a curious passage:—"This that is written in this little book ought the priests to learn and teach to their parishes: and also it is necessary for simple priests that understand not the Scriptures: and it is made for simple people and put in English. And by cause that for to hear examples stirreth and moveth the people, that ben simple, more to devotion than to that great authority of science—as it appeareth by the right reverend father and doctor Bede, priest, which saith, in the Histories of England, that a bishop of Scotland, a subtle and a great clerk, was sent by the clerks of Scotland into England for to preach the Word of God; but by cause he used in his sermon subtle authorities, such as [for] simple people had, nor took, no savour, he returned without doing of any great good ne profit, wherefore they sent another of less science: the which was more plain, and used commonly in his sermons examples and parables, by which he profited much more unto the erudition of the simple people than did that other."

But, in wishing the highest knowledge to be simplified and made popular, the good old printer had no thought of rendering knowledge a light and frivolous thing, to be taken up and laid down without earnestness. In his truly beautiful exposition of the uses of knowledge, contained in his

prologue to the 'Mirror of the World,' he says, "Let us pray the Maker and Creator of all creatures, God Almighty, that, at the beginning of this book, it list him, of his most bounteous grace, to depart with us of the same that we may learn; and that learned, to retain; and that retained, to teach; that we may have so perfect science and knowledge of God, that we may get thereby the health of our souls, and to be partners of his glory, permanent, and without end, in heaven. Amen."

Gibbon, we think, has taken a somewhat severe view of the character of the works which were produced by the father of English printing:—"It was in the year 1474 that our first press was established in Westminster Abbey, by William Caxton: but in the choice of his authors, that liberal and industrious artist was reduced to comply with the vicious taste of his readers; to gratify the nobles with treatises on heraldry, hawking, and the game of chess, and to amuse the popular credulity with romances of fabulous knights and legends of more fabulous saints." The historian, however, notices with approbation the laudable desire which Caxton expresses to elucidate the history of his country. But his censure of the general character of the works of Caxton's press is somewhat too sweeping. It appears to us that a more just as well as a more liberal view of the use and tendency of these works is that of Thomas Warton, which we may be excused in quoting somewhat at length:—"By means

of French translations, our countrymen, who understood French much better than Latin, became acquainted with many useful books which they would not otherwise have known. With such assistances, a commodious access to the classics was opened, and the knowledge of ancient literature facilitated and familiarised in England, at a much earlier period than is imagined; and at a time when little more than the productions of speculative monks and irrefragable doctors could be obtained or were studied. . . . . When these authors, therefore, appeared in a language almost as intelligible as the English, they fell into the hands of illiterate and common readers, and contributed to sow the seeds of a national erudition, and to form a popular taste. Even the French versions of the religious, philosophical, historical, and allegorical compositions of those more enlightened Latin writers who flourished in the middle ages, had their use, till better books came into vogue: pregnant as they were with absurdities, they communicated instruction on various and new subjects, enlarged the field of information, and promoted the love of reading, by gratifying that growing literary curiosity which now began to want materials for the exercise of its operations. . . . These French versions enabled Caxton, our first printer, to enrich the state of letters in this country with many valuable publications. He found it no difficult task, either by himself or the help of his friends, to turn a considerable number of these pieces into English,

which he printed. Ancient learning had as yet made too little progress among us to encourage this enterprising and industrious artist to publish the Roman authors in their original language: and had not the French furnished him with these materials, it is not likely that Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, and many other good writers would by the means of his press have been circulated in the English tongue so early as the close of the fifteenth century." Warton adds in a note, "It was a circumstance favourable at least to English literature, owing indeed to the general illiteracy of the times, that our first printers were so little employed on books written in the learned languages. Almost all Caxton's books are English. The multiplication of English copies multiplied English readers, and these again produced new vernacular writers. The existence of a press induced many persons to turn authors who were only qualified to write in their native tongue." Having thus given the somewhat different views of two most able and accomplished scholars, viewing as they did the same objects through different media, we shall proceed to notice some of the more remarkable characteristics of the books issued from Caxton's press, rather regarding them as illustrations of the state of knowledge and the manners of his time, than as mere bibliographical curiosities.

The Histories of Troy is a book with which our readers must now be tolerably familiar. A writer in the century succeeding Caxton, one Robert

Braham, is very severe upon the old printer for this his work: "If a man studious of that history [the Trojan war] should seek to find the same in the doings of William Caxton, in his lewd [idle] 'Recueil of Troye,' what should he then find, think ye? Assuredly none other thing but a long, tedious, and brainless babbling, tending to no end, nor having any certain beginning; but proceeding therein as an idiot in his folly, that cannot make an end till he be bidden. Much like the foolish and unsavoury doings of Orestes, whom Juvenal remembereth—which Caxton's 'Recueil,' who so list with judgment peruse, shall rather think his doings worthy to be numbered amongst the trifling tales and barren lewderies of Robin Hood and Bevis of Hampton, than remain as a monument of so worthy an history." We have no sympathy with writers, old or modern, who are severe upon "trifling tales and barren lewderies"—the stories and ballads which are the charm of childhood and the solace of age. It is somewhat hard that Caxton should be thus maltreated for having made the English familiar with that romance of the Trojan war with which all Europe was enamoured in some language or another. The authority which Le Fevre partly followed was the Troy Book of Guido di Colonna; and he is traced to have translated his book from a Norman-French poet of the time of Edward the Second; and the Norman is to be traced to Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, the supposed authors of two ancient works on the His-

tory of Troy, but which histories are held to have been manufactured by an Englishman of the twelfth century. Guido di Colonna constructed the most captivating of the romances of chivalry upon these supposititious tales of Troy. Hector and Achilles are surrounded by him with all the attributes of knight-errantry; and the Grecian manners are Gothicised with all the peculiarities of the civilization of the middle ages. Lydgate constructed upon this romance his poem of the Troy Book; and Chaucer availed himself of it in his poem of 'Troilus and Cressida.' Shakspere, in his wonderful play upon the same part of the Trojan story of the middle ages, has used Chaucer, Lydgate, and Caxton; and several passages show that our great dramatic poet was perfectly familiar with the translation of our old printer, which was so popular that by Shakspere's time it had passed through six editions, and continued to be read even in the last century.

'*The Book of the whole Life of Jason*,' printed by Caxton in 1475, is another of these middle-age romances, founded upon the supposititious histories of Dares and Dictys.

Of '*The Game and Play of the Chess*' Caxton printed two editions, which he translated himself from the French. The first was finished on the last day of March, 1474; and it is supposed to have been the first book which he printed in England. Bagford says, "Caxton's first book in the Abbey was 'The Game of Chess;' a book in those

times much in use with all sorts of people, and in all likelihood first desired by the abbot, and the rest of his friends and masters." It was a book that Caxton clearly intended for the diffusion of knowledge amongst all ranks of people; for in his second edition he says, in not very complimentary phrase, "The noble clerks have written and compiled many notable works and histories," that they might come "to the knowledge and understanding of such as be ignorant, of which the number is infinite." And he adds, with still plainer speech, that, according to Solomon, "the number of fools is infinite." He says that amongst these noble clerks there was an excellent doctor of divinity in the kingdom of France, which "hath made a book of the chess moralised, which at such a time as I was resident in Bruges came into my hands."

It would seem to be an ingenious device of the reverend writer of the book of chess which Caxton translated, to associate with very correct instructions as to the mode of playing the game, such moralisations as would enable him therewith to teach the people "to understand wisdom and virtue." Caxton readily adopts the same notion. He dedicates the book to the Duke of Clarence: "Forasmuch as I have understood and known that you are inclined unto the commonweal of the king, our said sovereign lord, his nobles, lords, and common people of his noble realm of England, and that ye saw gladly the inhabitants of the same informed in good, virtuous, profitable, and honest manners." This book con-

tains authorities, sayings, and stories, "applied unto the morality of the public weal, as well of the nobles and of the common people, after the game and play of chess;" and Caxton trusts that "other, of what estate or degree he or they stand in, may see in this little book that they govern themselves as they ought to do." This book of chess contains four treatises. The first describes the invention of the game in the time of a king of Babylon, Ems-merodach, a cruel king, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom a philosopher showed the game for the purpose of exhibiting "the manners and condition of a king, of the nobles, and of the common people and their offices, and how they should be touched and drawn, and how he should amend himself and become virtuous." This is a bold fable, and takes us farther back than Sir William Jones, who says that chess was imported from the west of India, in the sixth century, and known immemorially in Hindustan by the name of Chaturanga, or the four members of an army, namely, elephants, horses, chariots, and foot-soldiers. The second treatise in Caxton's book describes, first, the office of a king: by this name the principal piece was always known. Secondly, of the queen; this name would seem to belong to the time of Caxton, for Chaucer and Lydgate call the piece Fers or Feers, a noble, a general, —hence Peer. Thirdly, of the Alphyns: this is the same as the present bishop; the French called this personage the Fou, and Rabelais calls him the Archer. Fourthly, the knight, who was always

called by this name, in English and French chess. The rook, the fifth dignified piece, is from the Eastern name Ruç. Caxton goes on to inform us that the third treatise is of the offices of the common people. This treatise relates to the pawns; and a curious thing it is that the eight pawns of the board are taken by him each to represent large classes of the commonalty. The denominations of these classes somewhat vary in the two editions, but their general arrangement is the same. We have, in the first class, labourers and tillers of the earth; in the second, smiths and other workers in iron and metal; in the third, notaries, advocates, scriveners, drapers, and makers of cloth; in the fourth, merchants and changers; in the fifth, physicians, leeches, spicers, and apothecaries; in the sixth, taverners, hostelers, and victuallers; in the seventh, guards of the cities, receivers of custom, and tollers; and lastly, messengers, couriers, ribalds, and players at the dice.

The second edition of 'The Game of the Chess,' which is without date or place, was the first book printed in the English language which contained woodcuts. We give a fac-simile of the figure of the knight in Caxton's volume.

The original art of engraving on wood, and the production of block-books, gradually merged, as we have seen, into the art of printing from moveable types. From that time woodcuts became a secondary part of books, used, indeed, very often by the early printers, but by no

means forming an indispensable branch of typography. Imitating the manuscript books, the first printers chiefly employed the wood-engraver upon initial letters; and sometimes the pages of their works were surrounded by borders, which contained white lines or sprigs of foliage upon a black ground.



If a figure, or group of figures, was introduced, little more than the outline was first attempted. By degrees, however, endeavours were made to represent gradations of shadow; and a few light hatchings, or white dots, were employed. All cross-hatchings, such as characterize a line-engraving upon metal,

were carefully avoided by the early woodcutters, on account of the difficulty in the process. Mr. Ottley, in his 'History of Engraving,' says that an engraver on wood, of the name of Wohlgemuth (who flourished at Nuremburg about 1480), "perceived that, though difficult, this was not impossible;" and, in the cuts of the 'Nuremburg Chronicle,' a "successful attempt was first made to imitate the bold hatchings of a pen-drawing." Albert Durer, an artist of extraordinary talent, became the pupil of Wohlgemuth; and by him, and many others, wood-engraving was carried to a perfection which it subsequently lost till its revival in our own country.



Lord Rivers presenting his book to Edward IV.

CHAPTER VII.

Female Manners — Lord Rivers — Popular History — Popular Science — Popular Fables — Popular Translations — The Canterbury Tales — Statutes — Books of Chivalry — Caxton's last days.

In the library belonging to the Archbishops of Canterbury, at Lambeth, is a beautiful manuscript, on vellum, of a French work, 'Les Dicts Moraux des Philosophes,' which contains the illumination of which the above is a copy. In lines written under the illumination the book is stated to be translated by "Antony erle," by which Lord Rivers is meant.

This book was printed by Caxton in 1477; and it is held that the man kneeling by the side of the earl in the illumination is the printer of the book. We have already mentioned the confidential intercourse which subsisted between Lord Rivers and his printer, with regard to the revision of this work. (See page 82.) The passages which we there quote are given in a sort of appendix, in which Caxton professes to have himself translated a chapter upon women, which Lord Rivers did not think fit to meddle with, and which he prints with a real or affected apprehension. The printer's statement is altogether such a piece of sly humour, that we willingly transcribe it, trusting that our readers will see the drollery through the quaintness:—

"I find that my said lord hath left out certain and divers conclusions touching women. Whereof I marvelled that my said lord hath not writ on them, nor what hath moved him so to do, nor what cause he had at that time. But I suppose that some fair lady hath desired him to leave it out of his book; or else he was amorous on some noble lady, for whose love he would not set it in his book; or else for the very affection, love, and good will that he hath unto all ladies and gentlewomen, he thought that Socrates spared the sooth, and wrote of women more than truth; which I cannot think that so true a man and so noble a philosopher as Socrates was, should write otherwise than truth. For if he had made fault in writing of women, he ought not nor should not be believed in his other

Dictes and Sayings. But I perceive that my said lord knoweth verily that such defaults be not had nor found in the women born and dwelling in these parts nor regions of the world. Socrates was a Greek, born in a far country from hence, which country is all of other conditions than this is, and men and women of other nature than they be here in this country; for I wot well, of whatsoever condition women be in Greece, the women of this country be right good, wise, pleasant, humble, discreet, sober, chaste, obedient to their husbands, true, secret, stedfast, ever busy, and never idle, attemperate in speaking, and virtuous in all their works; or at least should be so. For which causes so evident, my said lord, as I suppose, thought it was not of necessity to set in his book the sayings of his author Socrates touching women."

There is a book translated by Caxton from the French, and printed by him in 1484, which we may incidentally here notice, as illustrating the female manners of that century. It is called '*The Knight of the Tower;*' and really would seem to justify the sarcasm of Caxton where he says, "The women of this country be right good, &c., or at least should be so." The preface implies that the work, though written by a Frenchman, applies to the contemporary state of society in England; and it may be well to see how our ladies were employed about four centuries ago. It appears from this curious performance that the ladies, although well accomplished in needlework, confectionary, church

music, and even taught something of the rude surgery of those days, were not great proficients in reading, and the art of writing was thought to be better let alone by them. The Knight of the Tower complains of the levity of the ladies. Their extravagance in dress, the husband's standing complaint, is thus put by the Knight of the Tower:- "The wives say to their husbands every day, 'Sir, such a wife and such hath such goodly array that beseemeth her well, and I pray you I may have of the same.' And if her husband say, 'Wife, if such have such array, such that are wiser than they have it not,' she will say, 'No force it is [that is of no consequence], for they cannot wear it; and if I have it, ye shall see how well it will become me, for I can wear it.' And thus with her words her husband must needs ordain her that which she desireth, or he shall never have peace with her, for they will find so many reasons that they will not be warned [put off]." The women of lower estate come in for the same censure, the complaint being that they *fur* their draperies and *fur* their heels. It appears to have been the practice for ladies to go very freely to feasts and assemblies, to joustings and tournaments, without what we now call the protection of a husband or a male relation. A contemporary writer says, they lavished their wealth and corrupted their virtue by these freedoms. If we may judge from the warnings which the Knight of the Tower gives his daughters of the discipline they would receive at the hands of their husbands

for any act of disobedience,—the discipline not only of hard words, but of harder blows,—it is not to be wondered at that they sought abroad for some relief to the gloom and severity of their home lives. It is pleasant, amidst these illustrations of barbarous and profligate manners, to find a picture of that real goodness which has distinguished the female character in all ages, and which, especially in the times of feudal oppression of which we are speaking, mitigated the lot of those who were dependent upon the benevolence of the great possessors of property. The good Lady Cecile of Balleville is thus described by the Knight of the Tower: "Her daily ordinance was, that she rose early enough, and had ever friars and two or three chaplains, which said matins before her within the oratory. And after, she heard a high mass and two low, and said her service full devoutly. And after this she went and arrayed herself, and walked in her garden or else about her place, saying her other devotions and prayers. And as time was she went to dinner. And after dinner, if she wist and knew any sick folk or women in their childbed, she went to see and visited them, and made to be brought to them her best meat. And there as she might not go herself, she had a servant proper therefore, which rode upon a little horse, and bare with him great plenty of good meat and drink, for to give to the poor and sick folk there as they were. Also, she was of such custom, that, if she knew any poor gentlewoman that should be wedded, she arrayed her

with her jewels. Also she went to the obsequies of poor gentlewomen, and gave there torches, and such other luminary as it needed thereto. And after she had heard evensong she went to her supper if she fasted not, and timely she went to bed; and made her steward to come to her to wit [know] what meat should be had the next day. She made great abstinence, and wore the hair upon the Wednesday and upon the Friday." This is a true character of the middle ages;—goodness based upon sincere piety, but that degenerating into penances and mortifications, which our Reformed faith teaches us to believe are unnecessary for spiritual elevation.

Caxton's early friend and patron, Lord Rivers, appears, as far as we can judge from the books which remain, to have been the only one of the first English printer's contemporaries who rendered him any literary assistance. He contributed three works to Caxton's press; namely, the 'Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers,' 'The Moral Proverbs of Christine de Pisa,' and the book named 'Cordial.'

The book named '*Cordial*' is clearly described in a prologue by Caxton. It was delivered to him, he says, by Lord Rivers, "for to be imprinted and so multiplied to go abroad among the people, that thereby more surely might be remembered the four last things undoubtedly coming." Caxton, in an elaborate commendation of his patron, of whose former "great tribulation and adversity" he speaks,

says, "It seemeth that he conceiveth well the mutability and the unstableness of this present life, and that he desireth, with a great zeal and spiritual love, our ghostly help and perpetual salvation." Lord Rivers had indeed borne tribulation since the time when, the flower of Edward's court, he jousted with the Bastard of Burgundy in Smithfield, in 1468. In the following year his father and brother were murdered by a desperate faction at Northampton. When Lord Rivers, conceiving the mutability and unstableness of life, wrote the book called 'Cordial,' he was only six-and-thirty years of age. Three years after Caxton printed the book, the translator was himself murdered at Pomfret by the Protector Richard. Shakspere did not do injustice to the noble character of this peer when he makes him exclaim, when he was led to the block,

> "Sir Richard Ratcliff, let me tell thee this,—
> To-day shalt thou behold a subject die,
> For truth, for duty, and for loyalty."
> *Richard III.*, Act iii., Scene 2.

There is left to us a remarkable fragment which indicates to us something higher than the ability and literary attainment of this unfortunate nobleman. It has been preserved by John Rouse, a contemporary historian, who lived in the pleasant solitude of Guy's Cliff, near Warwick, and died there in 1491. He says (we translate from his Latin), "In the time of his imprisonment at Pomfret he wrote a balet in English, which has been shown to me, having these words—Sum what musyng," &c.; and then Rouse transcribes the ballad, of which

the second stanza is imperfect, but has been supplied from another ancient copy. Percy, who prints the ballad in his 'Reliques,' says, "If we consider that it was written during his cruel confinement in Pomfret Castle, a short time before his execution in 1483, it gives us a fine picture of the composure and steadiness with which this stout earl beheld his approaching fate." We subjoin the ballad, modernising the orthography:—

Somewhat musing, and more mourning,
In remembering the unstedfastness,
This world being of such wheeling,
Me contrarying what may I guess.

I fear doubtless, remediless
Is now to seize my woful chance;
For unkindness withouten less
And no redress, me doth avance,

With displeasance to my grievance
And no surance of remedy:
Le in this trance, now in substance
Such is my dance, willing to die.

Methinks truly bounden am I,
And that greatly, to be content,
Seeing plainly fortune doth wry
All contrary from mine intent.

My life was lent me to one intent;
It is nigh spent. Welcome, fortune!
But I ne went thus to be shent,
But she it meant—such is her won [wont].

Turn we to one of the more important works of Caxton, in which he sought to inform his countrymen generally with a knowledge of history. '*The Chronicles of England*,' printed in 1480, begins at the fabulous period before the Romans, and ends at the commencement of the reign of Edward IV.

The early legends of English History, which even Milton did not disdain to touch upon, are founded upon the 'History' of Nennius, which was composed in the ninth century, and which was copied by Geoffrey of Monmouth and other of the early chroniclers. Caxton took the thing as he found it, and continued the narrative to his own time. He deals prudently with contemporary events. Caxton followed up these chronicles in the same year with another book, called '*The Description of Britain*,' in which he tells of the extent of the island, its marvels and wonders, its highways, rivers, cities, and towns, provinces, laws, bishoprics, and languages. He describes also Scotland and Ireland. Some of his marvels and wonders are a little astounding; but others are as precise in their description, and as forcible (brevity being an essential quality), as we could well desire. Thus of Stonehenge: "At Stonehinge beside Salisbury there be great stones and wondrous huge; and be reared on high, as it were gates set upon other gates; nevertheless it is not known cleanly nor aperceived how and wherefore they be so areared and so wonderful hanged."

From the chronicles of his own country Caxton sought to lead his readers forward to a knowledge of the history of other countries. He published in 1482 '*The Polychronicon*, containing the bearings and deeds of many times.' This book was originally composed by Higden, a Benedictine monk of Chester; and was translated from Latin into Eng-

lish by John de Trevisa, who lived in the times of Edward III. and Richard II. Caxton in his title-page, says, "Imprinted by William Caxton, after having somewhat changed the rude and old English, that is to wit certain words which in these days be neither used nor understanden." In another place he says, "And now at this time simply imprinted and set in form by me, William Caxton, and a little embellished from the old making." Caxton was here doing what every person who desires to advance the knowledge of his time, by extending that knowledge beyond the narrow circle of scholars and antiquarians, must always do. He popularised an old book; he made it intelligible. He did not do,—as some verbal pedants amongst us still persist in doing,—present our old writers, and especially our poets, in all the capriciousness of their original orthography. He was the first great diffuser of knowledge amongst us; and surely we think he took a judicious course. He says of the 'Polychronicon,' "The book is general, touching shortly many notable matters." But, *general* as the book was, and extensively as he desired to circulate it according to his limited means, he does not approach his task without a due sense of the importance of the knowledge he was seeking to impart. The praise of history in his proem is truly eloquent: "History is a perpetual conservatrice of those things that have been before this present time; and also a quotidian witness of benefits, of malfaits [evil deeds], great acts, and triumphal

victories of all manner of people. And also, if the terrible feigned fables of poets have much stirred and moved men to right and conserving of justice, how much more is to be supposed that history, assertrice of virtue and a mother of all philosophy, moving our manners to virtue, reformeth and reconcileth near hand all those men which through the infirmity of our moral nature hath led the most part of their life in otiosity [idleness], and misspended their time, passed right soon out of remembrance: of which life and death is equal oblivion." Again, "Other monuments distributed in divers changes endure but for a short time or season; but the virtue of history diffused and spread by the universal world hath time, which consumeth all other things, as conservatrice and keeper of her work."

'*The Image or Mirror of the World*' is one of the popular books which Caxton translated from the French. It treats of a vast variety of subjects, after the imperfect natural philosophy of those days. We have an account of the seven liberal arts; of nature, how she worketh; and how the earth holdeth him right in the middle of the world. We have also much geographical information, amongst which the wonders of Inde occupy a considerable space. Meteorology and astronomy take up another large portion. The work concludes with an account of the celestial paradise. This book seems specially addressed to high and courtly readers, for Caxton says, "The hearts of nobles, in eschewing of idle-

ness at such time as they have none other virtuous occupations on hand, ought to exercise them in reading, studying, and visiting the noble feats and deeds of the sage and wise men, sometime travelling in profitable virtues; of whom it happeneth oft that some be inclined to visit the books treating of sciences particular; and other to read and visit books speaking of feats of arms, of love, or of other marvellous histories; and among all other, this present book, which is called the 'Image or Mirror of the World,' ought to be visited, read, and known, by cause it treateth of the world, and of the wonderful division thereof." But the translator tells us, "I have endeavoured me therein, at the request and desire, cost and dispense, of the honourable and worshipful man, Hugh Brice, citizen and alderman of London." We may therefore believe that Caxton intended this book for a wider circulation than that of the nobles whom he addresses; especially as he says, "I have made it so plain that every man reasonable may understand it, if he advisedly and attentively read it, or hear it." The good old printer rendered the book intelligible to all classes, under the condition that all who read it should give their attention. This is one of the books into which Caxton has introduced woodcuts, giving twenty-seven figures, "without which it may not lightly [easily] be understood." These twenty-seven figures are diagrams, explanatory of some of the scientific principles laid down in this book; but there are eleven other cuts illustrative

of other subjects treated in the work. An idea may be formed of the manner in which those cuts are engraved from the following fac-simile of 'Music.'



One of the most popular books of Caxton's translation must unquestionably have been the '*History of Reynard the Fox.*' It is held that this work was composed in the twelfth century; and surely the author must have been a man of high genius to have constructed a fable which has been ever since popular in all countries, and delights us even to this hour. Caxton has no woodcuts to his edition, to which the book subsequently owed a portion of its attractions.

'*The Subtil Histories and Fables of Esop*,' translated by Caxton from the French, were printed by him in 1483, "The first year of the reign of King Richard the Third." In the first leaf there is a supposed portrait of Esop, a large rough woodcut, exhibiting him as he is described, with a great head, large visage, long jaws, sharp eyes, a short neck, *curb*-backed, and so forth. There is a controversy whether Richard the Third was a deformed man or not. It is held by many that it was one of the scandals put forth under his triumphant successor (which scandal Shakspere has for ever made current), that Richard was

> "Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd."

It strikes us that Caxton would scarcely have ventured, in the first year of King Richard III., to exhibit a print of a hump-backed Esop (for any print was then a rare thing), if his dread sovereign had been remarkable amongst the people for a similar defect. The conclusion of these fables of Esop has a story told by Caxton as from himself, which is a remarkable specimen of a plain narrative style, with a good deal of sly humour:—

"Now then I will finish all these fables with this tale that followeth, which a worshipful priest and a parson told me late: he said that there were dwelling at Oxenford two priests, both Masters of Arts—of whom that one was quick and could put himself forth; and that other was a good simple priest. And so it happened that the master

that was pert and quick was anon promoted to a benefice or twain, and after to prebends, and for to be a dean of a great prince's chapel, supposing and weening that his fellow, the simple priest, should never be promoted, but be always an annual, or, at the most, a parish priest. So after a long time that this worshipful man, this dean, came running into a good parish with five or seven horses, like a prelate, and came into the church of the said parish, and found there this good simple man, sometime his fellow, which came and welcomed him lowly. And that other bade him 'Good morrow, Master John,' and took him slightly by the hand, and axed him where he dwelt.—And the good man said, 'In this parish.' 'How,' said he, 'are ye here a sole priest, or a parish priest?' 'Nay, Sir,' said he, 'for lack of a better, though I be not able nor worthy, I am parson and curate of this parish.' And then that other vailed [lowered] his bonnet, and said, 'Master Parson, I pray you to be not displeased; I had supposed ye had not been beneficed. But, master,' said he, 'I pray you what is this benefice worth to you a year?' 'Forsooth,' said the good simple man, 'I wot never; for I make never accompts thereof, how well I have had it four or five years.' 'And know ye not,' said he, 'what it is worth?—it should seem a good benefice.' 'No, forsooth,' said he, 'but I wot well what it shall be worth to me.' 'Why,' said he, 'what shall it be worth?' 'Forsooth,' said he, 'if I do my true dealing in the

cure of my parishes in preaching and teaching, and do my part belonging to my cure, I shall have heaven therefore. And if their souls be lost, or any of them, by my default, I shall be punished therefore. And hereof I am sure.' And with that word the rich dean was abashed: and thought he should be the better, and take more heed to his cures and benefices than he had done. This was a good answer of a good priest and an honest. And herewith I finish this book, translated and imprinted by me, William Caxton." The moral of the fable is not obsolete.

One of Caxton's most splendid books, of which he seems to have printed three editions, was '*The Golden Legend.*' This is, indeed, an important work, printed in double columns, and containing between four and five hundred pages, which are largely illustrated with woodcuts. It was not without great caution, as we have already mentioned (page 107), that Caxton proceeded with this heavy and expensive undertaking. Happy would it have been for all printers if puissant and virtuous earls, and others in high places, had thought it a duty to encourage knowledge by taking a "reasonable quantity" of a great work; but happier are we now, when, such assistance being grudgingly bestowed or honestly despised, the makers of books can depend upon something more satisfying than the rich man's purse, which was generally associated with "the proud man's contumely."

In the prologue to the 'Golden Legend' Caxton recites several of the works which he had previously "translated out of French into English at the request of certain lords, ladies, and gentlemen." Those recited are the 'Recueil of Troy,' the 'Book of the Chess,' 'Jason,' the 'Mirror of the World,' Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' and 'Godfrey of Boulogne.' It is remarkable that no printed copy exists of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses;' but in the library of Magdalen College, Cambridge, there is a manuscript containing five books of the 'Metamorphoses,' which purport to be translated by Caxton. It was evidently a part of his plan for the encouragement of liberal education, to present a portion of the people with translations of the classics through the ready means that were open to him of re-translation from the French. Many translators in later times have availed themselves of such aids, without the honesty to indicate the immediate sources of their versions. Caxton printed '*The Book of Tully of Old Age*,' and '*Tullius his Book of Friendship*.' He seems to have had great difficulty in obtaining a copy of an old translation of 'Tullius de Senectute.' The Book 'De Amicitia' was translated by John, Earl of Worcester, the celebrated adherent of the house of York, who was beheaded in 1470. Caxton, we think somewhat unnecessarily, limits the perusal of the treatise on Old Age. "This book is not requisite nor eke convenient for every rude and simple man, which understandeth not of science

nor cunning, and for such as have not heard of the noble policy and prudence of the Romans; but for noble, wise, and great lords, gentlemen, and merchants, that have been and daily be occupied in matter touching the public weal: and in especial unto them that been passed their green age, and eke their middle age, called virility, and been approached unto *senectute*, called old and ancient age. Wherein they may see how to suffer and bear the same patiently; and what surety and virtue been in the same, and have also cause to be joyous and glad that they have escaped and passed the manifold perils and doubteous adventures that been in juvente and youth, as in this said book here following ye may more plainly see."

'*The Book of Eneydos*,' compiled from Vitgil, is not a translation of Virgil's great epic, but a sort of historical narrative formed upon the course of the poet's great story. The most remarkable passage of this book is that of Caxton's preface, in which he complains of the unstedfastness of our language, and the difficulty that he found between plain, rude, and curious terms. (See page 5.) In this translation he again limits his work to a particular class of persons; as if he felt, which was probably a prejudice of his time, that the inferior members of the laity ought not to touch anything that pertained to scholastic learning. He says, "Forasmuch as this present book is not for a rude uplandish man to labour therein, nor read it, but only for a clerk and a noble gentleman that feeleth

and understandeth in faits of arms, in love, and in noble chivalry: therefore, in mean between both, I have reduced and translated this said book into our English, not over rude nor curious, but in such terms as shall be understanden, by God's grace, according to my copy."

'*The book called Cathon*' (Cato's Morals) was destined by Caxton for a wider circulation:—"In my judgment it is the best book for to be taught to young children in schools, and also to people of every age it is full convenient if it be well understanden."

Dr. Dibdin, in his 'Typographical Antiquities,' says of Caxton, "Exclusively of the labours attached to the working of his press as a new art, our typographer contrived, though well stricken in years, to translate not fewer than five thousand closely printed folio pages. As a translator, therefore, he ranks among the most laborious, and, I would hope, not the least successful, of his tribe. The foregoing conclusion is the result of a careful enumeration of all the books translated as well as printed by him; which [the translated books], if published in the modern fashion, would extend to nearly twenty-five octavo volumes!" The exact nature of his labours seems, as might well be imagined, to have been often determined by very accidental circumstances. One noble lord requests him to produce this book, and one worshipful gentleman urges him to translate that. He says himself of his Virgil, "After divers works made, trans-

lated, and achieved, having no work in hand, I, sitting in my study whereas lay many divers pamphlets and books, happened that to my hand came a little book in French, which late was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France, which book is named Eneydos, made in Latin by that noble poet and great clerk Virgil." Some books, indeed, he would be determined to print by their existing popularity. Such were his two editions of Chaucer's '*Canterbury Tales*,' which we may be sure, from his sound criticism, he felt the necessity of promulgating to a much wider circle than had been reached by the transcribers. (See page 31.) Caxton was especially the devoted printer of Chaucer. His truly honourable conduct in venturing upon a new edition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' when he found his first was incorrect, exhibits an example in the first printer and the first publisher which the printers and publishers of all subsequent times ought to reverence and imitate. The early printers, English and foreign, were indeed a high and noble race. They did not set themselves up to be the patrons of letters; they did not dispense their dole to scholars grudgingly and thanklessly; they worked with them; they encountered with them the risks of profit and of fame; they were scholars themselves; they felt the deep responsibility of their office; they carried on the highest of all commerce in an elevated temper; they were not mere hucksters nd chafferers. It was in no spirit of pride, it was

in the spirit of duty, that Caxton raised a table of verses to Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. In his edition of Boëtius, which he gives us to understand was translated by Master Geoffrey Chaucer, he says, "And furthermore I desire and require you, that of your charity ye would pray for the soul of the said worshipful man Geoffrey Chaucer, first translator of this said book into English, and embellisher in making the said language ornate and fair, which shall endure perpetually, and therefore he ought eternally to be remembered; of whom the body and corps lieth buried in the Abbey of Westminster, beside London, to fore the chapel of Saint Benet, by whose sepulture is written on a table, hanging on a pillar, his epitaph made by a poet-laureate, whereof the copy followeth." The writer of the Life of Chaucer, in the 'Biographia Britannica,' says, "It is very probable he lay beneath a large stone of gray marble in the pavement where the monument to Mr. Dryden now stands, which is in the front of that chapel [St. Benet's], upon the erecting of which [Dryden's monument] this stone was taken up, and sawed in pieces to made good the pavement. At least this seems best to answer the description of the place given by Caxton." There appears, according to the ancient editors of Chaucer's works, to have been two Latin lines upon his tombstone previous to the epitaph set up upon a pillar by Caxton. That epitaph was written by Stephanus Surigánius, poet-laureate of Milan. The monument of Chaucer, which still

remains in the Abbey, around which the ashes of Spenser, and Beaumont, and Drayton, and Jonson, and Cowley, and Dryden, have clustered, was erected by an Oxford student in 1555. There might have been worse things preserved, and yet to be looked upon, in that Abbey, than honest old Caxton's epitaph upon him whom he calls "the worshipful father and first founder and embellisher of ornate eloquence in our English."

As the popularity of Chaucer demanded various impressions of his works from Caxton's press, so did he print an apparently cheap edition of Gower's '*Confessio Amantis*,' in small type. Two of Lydgate's works were also printed by him. The more fugitive poetry which issued from his press has probably all perished. In one of the volumes of Old Ballads in the British Museum is a fragment of a poem, of which nothing further is known, telling the story of some heroine that lived a life of unvaried solitude :—

> "From her childhood I find that she fled
> Office of woman, and to wood she went,
> And many a wild harte's blood she shed
> With arrows broad that she to them sent."

One of the most important uses of early printing in England is to be found in fragments of the Statutes of the Realm, made in the first parliament of Richard III., and in the first, second, and third parliaments of Henry VII., some leaves of which exist. That the promulgation of the laws would soon follow the introduction of the art of printing

was a natural consequence. Early in the next century the publication of Acts of Parliament became an important branch of trade; and a King's Printer was formally appointed. Up to our own times all the cheapening processes of the art of printing had been withheld, at least in their results, from that branch of printing which was to instruct the people in their new laws. The Statutes were the dearest of books, and kept dear for no other purpose but to preserve one relic of the monopolies of the days of the Stuarts. The abuse has been partially remedied.

We have purposely reserved to the conclusion of this account of the productions of Caxton's press, some notice of those works to the undertaking of which he seems to have been moved by his familiarity with the frequenters of the court,—those whose talk was of tournaments and battles, of gallant knights and noble dames; and whose heads, like that of the worthy Knight of La Mancha, were "full of nothing but enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, complaints, amours, torments." It is quite marvellous to look upon the enthusiasm with which Master Caxton deals with these matters in the days when he had achieved

"The silver livery of advised age."

It offers us one of the many proofs of the energy and youthfulness of his character. We have already quoted his address to the knights of Eng-

land (see page 66), given in his '*Book of the Order of Chivalry*,' supposed to have been printed in 1484. After this address he proposes a question which shows that he considers he has fallen upon degenerate days. "How many knights be there now in England that have the use and the exercise of a knight? that is to wit, that he knoweth his horse, and his horse him; that is to say, he being ready at a point to have all thing that belongeth to a knight, an horse that is according and broken after his hand, his armour and harness suit, and so forth, *et cetera*. I suppose, an a due search should be made, there should be many founden that lack: the more pity is! I would it pleased our sovereign Lord, that twice or thrice a year, or at the least once, he would cry jousts of peace, to the end that every knight should have horse and harness, and also the use and craft of a knight, and also to tourney one against one, or two against two; and the best to have a prize, a diamond or jewel, such as should please the prince. This should cause gentlemen to resort to the ancient customs of chivalry to great fame and renown: and also to be alway ready to serve their prince when he shall call them, or have need." There is always some compensating principle arising in the world to prevent its too rapid degeneracy; and thus, although the tournament has long ceased, except as a farce, there is many a noble who may still say, "That he knoweth his horse, and his horse him," through the attractions of Melton Mowbray and Epsom.

Hunting and horse-racing have done much to keep up our pristine civilization. In '*The Fait of Arms and Chivalry*,' 1489, Caxton undertakes a higher strain. He translates this book, "to the end that every gentleman born to arms and all manner men of war, captains, soldiers, victuallers, and all other, should have knowledge how they ought to behave them in the faits of war and of battles." And yet, strange to relate, this belligerent book was written by a fair lady, Christina of Pisa. The '*Histories of King Arthur*,' printed in 1485, lands us at once into all the legendary hero-worship of the middle ages. Caxton, in his preface to this translation by Sir Thomas Mallory, gives us a pretty full account of the Nine Worthies, "the best that ever were;" and then he goes on to expound his reasons for once doubting whether the Histories of Arthur were anything but fables, and how he was convinced that he was a real man. But surely in these chivalrous books Caxton had an honest purpose. He exhorts noble lords and ladies, with all other estates, to read this said book, "wherein they shall well find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalries; for herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good, and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown." '*The Life of Charles the Great*' succeeded the 'Histories of King Arthur;' for, according to

Caxton, Charlemagne was the second of the three worthy. It is in the preface to this book that Caxton says that his father and mother in his youth sent him to school, by which, by the sufferance of God, he gets his living.

We may conclude this imperfect description of Caxton's labours in the literature of romance and chivalry, so characteristic of the age in which he lived, with the following extract from the '*History of King Blanchardine and Queen Eglantine his wife*,' which he translated from the French, at the command of the Duchess of Somerset, mother of King Henry VII. The passage shows us that the old printers were dealers in foreign books as well as in their own productions: "Which book I had long to fore *sold* to my said lady, and knew well that the story of it was honest and joyful to all virtuous young noble gentlemen and women, for to read therein, as for their pastime. For under correction, in my judgment, histories of noble feats and valiant acts of arms and war, which have been achieved in old time of many noble princes, lords, and knights, are as well for to see and know their valiantness for to stand in the special grace and love of their ladies, and in like wise for gentle young ladies and demoiselles for to learn to be stedfast and constant in their part to them that they once have promised and agreed to, such as have put their lives oft in jeopardy for to please them to stand in grace, as it is to occupy the ken and study overmuch in books of contemplation."

This is a defence of novel-reading which we could scarcely have expected at so early a period of our literature.

In 1490 Caxton was approaching, according to all his biographers, to the great age of fourscore. About this period he appears to have consigned some relation to the grave, perhaps his wife. "In the first year of the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster, from May 17, 1490, to June 3, 1492, there is the following entry:—

> "Item; atte bureynge of Mawde Caxton for torches and tapers . . iiij^{s} ij^{d}."

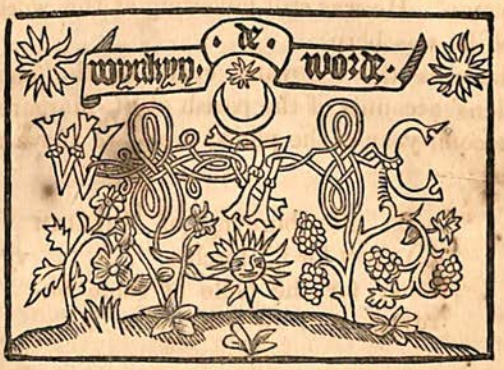
On the 15th June, 1490, Caxton finished translating out of French into English '*The Art and Craft to know well to die.*' The commencement of the book is an abrupt one: "When it is so, that what a man maketh or doeth it is made to come to some end, and if the thing be good and well made it must needs come to good end; then by better and greater reason every man ought to intend in such wise to live in this world, in keeping the commandments of God, that he may come to a good end. And then out of this world, full of wretchedness and tribulations, he may go to heaven unto God and his saints, unto joy perdurable."

That the end of Caxton was a good end we have little doubt. We have a testimony, which we shall presently see, that he *worked* to the end. He

worked upon a book of pious instruction to the last day of his life. He was not slumbering when his call came. He was still labouring at the work for which he was born.

There is the following entry in the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Margaret, in the second year of the period we have above mentioned:—

"Item; atte bureyng of WILLIAM CAXTON for iiij torches . . . vj^{s} viii^{d}
Item; for the belle at same bureyng . . . . . vj^{d}."



Mark of Wynkyn de Worde.*

CHAPTER VIII.

The Chapel — The Companions — Increase of Readers — Books make Readers — Caxton's Types — Wynkyn's Dream — The first Paper-mill.

It was evensong time when, after a day of listlessness, the printers in the Almonry at Westminster prepared to close the doors of their workshop. This was a tolerably spacious room, with a carved oaken roof. The setting sun shone brightly into the chamber, and lighted up such furniture as no other room in London could then exhibit. Between the columns which supported the roof stood two presses

* He always, in these marks, associated the device of Caxton with his own; glorying, as he well might, in succeeding to the business of his honoured master, and continuing for so many years the good work which he had begun.

—ponderous machines. A *form* of types lay unread upon the *table* of one of these presses; the other was empty. There were *cases* ranged between the opposite columns; but there was no *copy* suspended ready for the compositors to proceed with in the morning. No heap of wet paper was piled upon the floor. The *balls*, removed from the presses, were rotting in a corner. The *ink-blocks* were dusty, and a thin film had formed over the oily pigment. He who had set these machines in motion, and filled the whole space with the activity of mind, was dead. His daily work was ended.

Three grave-looking men, decently clothed in black, were girding on their swords. Their caps were in their hands. The door opened, and the chief of the workmen came in. It was Wynkyn de Worde. With short speech, but with looks of deep significance, he called a *chapel*—the printer's parliament—a conclave as solemn and as omnipotent as the Saxons' Witenagemot. Wynkyn was the Father of the Chapel.

The four drew their high stools round the *imposing-stone*—those stools on which they had sat through many a day of quiet labour, steadily working to the distant end of some ponderous folio, without hurry or anxiety. Upon the stone lay two uncorrected folio pages—a portion of the 'Lives of the Fathers.' The *proof* was not returned. He that they had followed a few days before to his grave in Saint Margaret's church had lifted it once back to his failing eyes,—and then they closed in night.

"Companions," said Wynkyn—(surely that word "*companions*" tells of the antiquity of printing, and of the old love and fellowship that subsisted amongst its craft)—"companions, the good work will not stop."

"Wynkyn," said Richard Pynson, "who is to carry on the work?"

"I am ready," answered Wynkyn.

A faint expression of joy rose to the lips of these honest men, but it was damped by the remembrance of him they had lost.

"He died," said Wynkyn, "as he lived. The Lives of the Holy Fathers is finished, as far as the translator's labour. There is the rest of the copy. Read the words of the last page, which *I* have written:—

"Thus endeth the most virtuous history of the devout and right-renowned lives of holy fathers living in desert, worthy of remembrance to all well-disposed persons, which hath been translated out of French into English by William Caxton, of Westminster, late dead, and finished at the last day of his life."*

The tears were in all their eyes; and "God rest his soul!" was whispered around.

"Companion," said William Machlinia, "is not this a hazardous enterprise?"

"I have encouragement," replied Wynkyn;—"the Lady Margaret, his Highness' mother, gives me aid. So droop not, fear not. We will carry

* These are the words with which this book closes.

on the work briskly in our good master's house.—So fill the case."*

A shout almost mounted to the roof.

"But why should we fear? You, Machlinia, you, Lettou, and you, dear Richard Pynson, if you choose not to abide with your old companion here, there is work for you all in these good towns of Westminster, London, and Southwark. You have money; you know where to buy types. Printing *must* go forward."

"Always full of heart," said Pynson. "But you forget the statute of King Richard; we cannot say 'God rest his soul,' for our old master scarcely ever forgave him putting Lord Rivers to death. You forget the statute. We ought to know it, for we printed it. I can turn to the file in a moment. It is the Act touching the merchants of Italy, which forbids them selling their wares in this realm. Here it is: 'Provided always that this Act, or any part thereof, in no wise extend or be prejudicial of any let, hurt, or impediment to any artificer or merchant stranger, of what nation or country he be or shall be of, for bringing into this realm, or selling by retail or otherwise, of any manner of books written or imprinted.' Can we stand up against that, if we have more presses than the old press of the Abbey of Westminster?"

"Ay, truly, we can, good friend," briskly an-

* "Wynkyn de Worde this hath set in print,
In William Caxton's house:—so fill the case."
Stanzas to 'Scala Perfectionis,' 1494.

swered Wynkyn. "Have we any books in our stores? Could we ever print books fast enough? Are there not readers rising up on all sides? Do we depend upon the court? The mercers and the drapers, the grocers and the spicers of the city, crowd here for our books. The rude uplandish men even take our books; they that our good master rather vilipended. The tapsters and taverners have our books. The whole country-side cries out for our ballads and our Robin Hood stories; and, to say the truth, the citizen's wife is as much taken with our King Arthurs and King Blanchardines as the most noble knight that Master Caxton ever desired to look upon in his green days of jousts in Burgundy. So fill the case."*

"But if foreigners bring books into England,' said cautious William Machlinia, "there will be more books than readers."

"Books make readers," rejoined Wynkyn. "Do you remember how timidly even our bold master went on before he was safe in his sell? Do you forget how he asked this lord to take a copy, and that knight to give him something in fee; and how he bargained for his summer venison and his winter venison, as an encouragement in his ventures? But he found a larger market than he ever counted upon, and so shall we all. Go ye forth, my brave fellows. Stay not to work for me,

* To "fill the case" is to put fresh types in the case, ready to arrange in new pages. The bibliographers scarcely understood the technical expression of honest Wynkyn.

if you can work better for yourselves. I fear no rivals."

"Why, Wynkyn," interposed Pynson, "you talk as if printing were as necessary as air; books as food, or clothing, or fire."

"And so they will be some day. What is to stop the want of books? Will one man have the command of books, and another desire them not? The time may come when every man shall require books."

"Perhaps," said Lettou, who had an eye to printing the Statutes, "the time may come when every man shall want to read an Act of Parliament, instead of the few lawyers who buy our Acts now."

"Hardly so," grunted Wynkyn.

"Or perchance you think that, when our sovereign liege meets his Peers and Commons in Parliament, it were well to print a book some month or two after, to tell what the said Parliament said, as well as ordained?"

"Nay, nay, you run me hard," said Wynkyn.

"And if within a month, why not within a day? Why shouldn't we print the words as fast as they are spoken? We only want fairy fingers to pick up our types, and presses that Doctor Faustus and his devils may some day make, to tell all London to-morrow morning what is done this morning in the palace at Westminster."

"Prithee, be serious," ejaculated Wynkyn. "Why do you talk such gallymaufry? I was

speaking of possible things; and I really think the day may come when one person in a thousand may read books and buy books, and we shall have a trade almost as good as that of armourers and fletchers."

"The Bible!" exclaimed Pynson; "O that we might print the Bible! I know of a copy of Wickliffe's Bible. That were indeed a book to print!"

"I have no doubt, Richard," replied Wynkyn, "that the happy time may come when a Bible shall be chained in every church, for every Christian man to look upon. You remember when our brother Hunte showed us the chained books in the Library at Oxford. So a century or two hence a Bible may be found in every parish. Twelve thousand parishes in England! We should want more paper in that good day, Master Richard."

"You had better fancy at once," said Lettou, "that every housekeeper will want a Bible! Heaven save the mark, how some men's imaginations run away with them!"

"I cannot see," interposed Machlinia, "how we can venture upon more presses in London. Here are two. They have been worked well, since the day when they were shipped at Cologne. Here are five good founts of type, as much as a thousand weight—*Great Primer*, *Double Pica*, *Pica*—a large and a small face, and *Long Primer*. They have well worked; they are pretty nigh worn out. What man would risk such an adventure, after our



O the right noble/right excellent & vertuous prince George duc of Clarence Erle of warwyk and of Salysburye/grete chamberlayn of Englond & leutenant of Irelond/oldest broder of kynge Edwardy by the grace of god kynge of England and of fraūce/your moost humble seruant william Caxton amonge other of your seruantes sendes vnto yow peas. helthe. Joye and victorye vpon your Enemyes/

Caxton's Type.

good old master? He was a favourite at court and in cloister. He was well patronized. Who is to patronize us?"

"The people, I tell you," exclaimed Wynkyn. "The babe in the cradle wants an Absey-book; the maid at her distaff wants a ballad; the priest wants his Pie; the young lover wants a romance of chivalry to read to his mistress; the lawyer wants his Statutes; the scholar wants his Virgil and Cicero. They will all want more the more they are supplied. How many in England have a book at all, think you? Let us make books cheaper by printing more of them at once. The churchwardens of St. Margaret's asked me six-and-eightpence yesterday for the volume that our master left the parish;* for not a copy can I get, if we should want to print again. Six-and-eightpence! That was exactly what he charged his customers for the volume. Print five hundred instead of two hundred, and we could sell it for three-and-fourpence."

"And ruin ourselves," said Machlinia. "Master Wynkyn, I shall fear to work for you if you go on so madly. What has turned your head?"

"Hearken," said Wynkyn. "The day our good master was buried I had no stomach for my home. I could not eat. I could scarcely look on the sunshine. There was a chill at my heart. I took the

* There is a record in the parish books of St. Margaret's of the churchwardens selling for 6*s.* 8*d.* one of the books bequeathed to the church by William Caxton.

key of our office, for you all were absent, and I came here in the deep twilight. I sat down in Master Caxton's chair. I sat till I fancied I saw him moving about, as he was wont to move, in his furred gown, explaining this copy to one of us, and shaking his head at that proof to the other. I fell asleep. Then I dreamed a dream, a wild dream, but one that seems to have given me hope and courage. There I sat, in the old desk at the head of this room, straining my eyes at the old proofs. The room gradually expanded. The four *frames* went on multiplying, till they became innumerable. I saw *case* piled upon *case;* and *form* side by side with *form.* All was bustle, and yet quiet, in that room. Readers passed to and fro; there was a glare of many lights; all seemed employed in producing one folio, an enormous folio. In an instant the room had changed. I heard a noise as of many wheels. I saw sheets of paper covered with ink as quickly as I pick up this type. Sheet upon sheet, hundreds of sheets, thousands of sheets, came from forth the wheels—flowing in unstained, like corn from the hopper, and coming out printed, like flour to the sack. They flew abroad as if carried over the earth by the winds. Again the scene changed. In a cottage, an artificer's cottage, though it had many things in it which belong to princes' palaces, I saw a man lay down his basket of tools and take up one of these sheets. He read it; he laughed, he looked angry; tears rose to his eyes; and then he read aloud to his wife and children.

I asked him to show me the sheet. It was wet; it contained as many types as our 'Mirror of the World.' But it bore the date of 1844. I looked around, and I saw shelves of books against that cottage wall—large volumes and small volumes; and a boy opened one of the large volumes and showed me numberless block-cuts; and the artificer and his wife and his children gathered round me, all looking with glee towards their books, and the good man pointed to an inscription on his book-shelves, and I read these words,

MY LIBRARY A DUKEDOM.

I woke in haste; and, whether awake or dreaming I know not, my master stood beside me, and smilingly exclaimed, 'This is my fruit.' I have encouragement in this dream."

"Friend Wynkyn," said Pynson, "these are distempered visions. The press may go forward; I think it will go forward. But I am of the belief that the press will never work but for the great and the learned, to any purpose of profit to the printer. How can we ever hope to send our wares abroad? We may hawk our ballads and our merry jests through London; but the citizens are too busy to heed them, and the apprentices and serving men too poor to buy them. To the country we cannot send them. Good lack, imagine the poor pedler tramping with a pack of books to Bristol or Winchester! Before he could reach either city through our wild roads, he would have his throat

cut or be starved. Master Wynkyn, we shall always have a narrow market till the king mends his highways, and that will never be."

"I am rather for trying, Master Wynkyn," said Lettou, "some good cutting jest against our friends in the Abbey, such as Dan Chaucer expounded touching the friars. That would sell in these precincts."

"Hush!" exclaimed Wynkyn: "the good fathers are our friends; and though some murmur against them, we might have worse masters."

"I wish they would let us print the Bible though," ejaculated Pynson.

"The time will come, and that right soon," exclaimed the hopeful Wynkyn.

"So be it," said they one and all.

"But what fair sheet of paper is that in your hand, good Wynkyn?" said Pynson.

"Master Richard, we are all moving onward. This is English-made paper. Is it not better than the brown thick paper we have had from over the sea? How *he* would have rejoiced in this accomplishment of John Tate's longing trials! Ay, Master Richard, this fair sheet was made in the new mill at Hertford; and well am I minded to use it in our Bartholomæus, which I shall straightly put in hand, when the Formschneider is ready. I have thought anent it; I have resolved on it; and I have indited some rude verses touching the matter, simple person as I am:—

"For in this world to reckon every thing
Pleasure to man, there is none comparable
As is to read and understanding
In books of wisdom—they ben so delectable,
Which sound to virtue, and ben profitable;
And all that love such virtue ben full glad
Books to renew, and cause them to be made.

And also of your charity call to remembrance
The soul of William Caxton, first printer of this book
In Latin tongue at Cologne, himself to advance,
That every well-disposed man may thereon look:
And John Tate the younger joy mote [may] he brook,
Which hath late in England made this paper thin,
That now in our English this book is printed in."

"Fairly rhymed, Wynkyn," said Lettou. "But John Tate the younger is a bold fellow. Of a surety England can never support a Paper-mill of its own."

"Come, to business," said William of Mechlin.

APPENDIX A.

THE following account of the invention of printing is given by an ancient German chronicler of the name of Trithemius, who appears to have personally known one of the three persons who clearly seem to have the best title to be called the inventors of printing.

"At this time, in the city of Mentz on the Rhine in Germany, and not in Italy, as some have erroneously written, that wonderful and then unheard-of art of printing and characterizing books was invented and devised by John Guttenberger, a citizen of Mentz, who, having expended almost the whole of his property in the invention of this art, and on account of the difficulties which he experienced on all sides, was about to abandon it altogether; when, by the advice, and through the means, of John Fust [or Faust], likewise a citizen of Mentz, he succeeded in bringing it to perfection. At first they formed [engraved] the characters or letters in written order on blocks of wood, and in this manner they printed the vocabulary called a 'Catholicon.' But with these forms [blocks] they could print nothing else, because the characters could not be transposed in these tablets, but were engraved thereon, as we have said. To this invention succeeded a more subtle one, for they found out the means of cutting the forms of all the letters of the alphabet, which they called matrices, from which again they cast characters of copper or tin of sufficient hardness to resist the necessary pressure, which they had before engraved by hand. And truly, as I learned thirty years since from Peter Opilio

(Schoeffer) de Gernsheim, citizen of Mentz, who was the son-in-law of the first inventor of this art, great difficulties were experienced after the first invention of this art of printing, for in printing the Bible, before they had completed the third quaternion (or gathering of four sheets), 4000 florins were expended. This Peter Schoeffer, whom we have above mentioned first servant and afterwards son-in-law to the first inventor, John Fust, as we have said, an ingenious and sagacious man, discovered the more easy method of casting the types, and thus the art was reduced to the complete state in which it now is. These three kept this method of printing secret for some time, until it was divulged by some of their workmen, without whose aid this art could not have been exercised; it was first developed at Strasburg, and soon became known to other nations. And thus much of the admirable and subtle art of printing may suffice—the first inventors were citizens of Mentz. These three first inventors of Printing, (videlicet) John Guttenberger, John Fust, and Peter Schoeffer, his son-in-law, lived at Mentz, in the house called Zum Jungen, which has ever since been called the Printing-office."



Guttenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer.

The invention of Schoeffer, which, whatever might have been its first mechanical imperfections, undoubtedly com-

pleted the principle of printing, is more particularly described in an early document, which is given in several learned works on typography, as proceeding from a relation of Fust. It is as follows:—"Peter Schoeffer, of Gernsheim, perceiving his master Fust's design, and being himself ardently desirous to improve the art, found out (by the good providence of God) the method of cutting (*incidendi*) the characters in a matrix, that the letters might each be singly cast, instead of being cut. He privately cut matrices for the whole alphabet; and when he showed his master the letters cast from these matrices, Fust was so pleased with the contrivance, that he promised Peter to give him his only daughter Christina in marriage; a promise which he soon after performed. But there were as many difficulties at first with these letters, as there had been before with wooden ones; the metal being too soft to support the force of the impression: but this defect was soon remedied by mixing the metal with a substance which sufficiently hardened it." John Schoeffer, the son of Peter, who was also a printer, confirms this account, adding, "Fust and Schoeffer concealed this new improvement by administering an oath of secrecy to all whom they intrusted, till the year 1462, when, by the dispersion of their servants into different countries, at the sacking of Mentz by the Archbishop Adolphus, the invention was publicly divulged."

APPENDIX B.

Books Printed by Caxton.

To our first printer are assigned 64 works, from 1471 to 1491. We subjoin a list of them, furnished to the 'Penny Cyclopædia' by Sir Henry Ellis, Principal Librarian of the British Museum. In this list are included the French edition

of the 'Recueil,' and the Oration of Russell, which are considered doubtful.

1. 'Le Recueil des Histoires de Troyes, compose par raoulle le feure, chapellein de Monseigneur le duc Philippe de Bourgoingne en l'an de grace mil cccclxiiii.' fol.

2. 'Propositio clarissimi Oratoris Magistri Johannis Russell, decretorum doctoris ac adtunc Ambassiatoris Edwardi Regis Anglie et Francie ad illustr. Principem Karolum ducem Burgundie super susceptione ordinis garterij, &c. 4to.

3. 'The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, composed and drawen out of diverce bookes of latyn into Frensshe by Raoul le ffeure in the yere 1464, and drawen out of frensshe in to Englisshe by William Caxton at the commaundement of Margarete Duchess of Burgoyne, &c., whych sayd translacion and werke was begonne in Brugis in 1468 and ended in the holy cyte of Colen 19 Sept. 1471,' fol.

4. 'The Game and Playe of the Chesse, translated out of the French, fynysshid the last day of Marche, 1474,' fol.

5. A second edition of the same, fol. (with woodcuts).

6. 'A Boke of the hoole lyf of Jason,' (1475,) fol.

7. 'The Dictes and notable wyse Sayenges of the Phylosophers, transl. out of Frenshe by lord Antoyne Wydeville Erle Ryuyeres, empr. at Westmestre, 1477,' fol.

8. 'The Morale Prouerbes of Christyne (of Pisa),' fol. 1478.

9. 'The Book named Cordyale: or Memorare Novissima, which treateth of The foure last Things,' begun 1478, finished 1480, fol.

10. 'The Chronicles of Englond,' Westm., 1480, fol.

11. 'Description of Britayne,' 1480, fol.

12. 'The Mirrour of the World or thymage of the same,' 1481, fol.

13. 'The Historye of Reynart the Foxe,' 1481, fol.

14. 'The Boke of Tullius de Senectute, with Tullius de Amicitia, and the Declamacyon, which laboureth to shew wherein honour sholde reste,' 1481, fol.

15. 'Godefroy of Boloyne; or, the laste Siege and Conqueste of Jherusalem,' Westm., 1481, fol.

16. 'The Polycronycon,' 1482, fol.

17. 'The Pylgremage of the Sowle;' translated from the French, Westm., 1483, fol.

18. 'Liber Festivalis, or Directions for keeping Feasts all the Yere,' Westm., 1483, fol.

19. 'Quatuor Sermones' (without date), fol.

20. 'Confessio Amantis, that is to saye in Englisshe, The Confessyon of the Louer, maad and compyled by Johan Gower, squyer,' Westm., 1483, fol.

21. 'The Golden Legende,' Westm., 1483, fol.

22. Another edition of 'The Legende,' sm. folio.

23. A third, 'fin. at Westmestre,' 20th May, 1483, fol.

24. 'The Booke callid Cathon' (Magnus), translated from the French, 1483, fol.

25. 'Parvus Chato' (without printer's name or date, but in Caxton's type), folio.

26. 'The Knyght of the Toure,' translated from the French; Westm. (1484), fol.

27. 'The Subtyl Historyes and Fables of Esope,' translated from the French, 1484, fol.

28. 'The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry, or Knyghthode,' translated from the French (assigned to 1484), fol.

29. 'The Book ryal; or the Book for a Kyng,' 1484, fol.

30. 'A Book of the noble Historyes of Kynge Arthur and of certen of his Knyghtes, which book was reduced in to Englysshe by syr Thomas Malory Knyght,' 1485, fol.

31. 'The Lyf of Charles the Grete Kyng of Fraunce and Emperour of Rome,' 1485, fol.

32. Another edition of the same, 1485, fol.

33. 'Thystorye of the noble ryght valyaunt and worthy Knyghte Parys and of the fayr Vyenne, the doulphyns doughter of Vyennoys,' translated from the French, 1485, fol.

34. 'The Book of Good Maners,' 1846, fol.

35. 'The Doctrinal of Sapyence,' translated from the French, 1489, fol.

36. 'The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye,' a translation from the first part of Vegetius de Re Militari, 1489, fol.

37. 'The Arte and Crafte to knowe well to dye,' translated from the French, 1490, fol.

38. 'The Boke of Eneydos, compyled by Vyrgyle,' translated from the French, 1490, fol.

39. 'The Talis of Cauntyrburye' (no date), fol.

40. Another edition (without date or place), fol.

41. 'Infancia Salvatoris,' 4to.

42. 'The Boke of Consolacion of Philosophie, whiche that Boecius made for his comforte and consolacion' (no date nor place), fol.

43. A collection of Chaucer's and Lydgate's minor Poems, 4to.

44. 'The Book of Fame, made by Gefferey Chaucer,' fol.

45. 'Troylus and Creseyde,' fol.

46. 'A Book for Travellers,' fol.

47. 'The Lyf of St. Katherin of Senis,' fol.

48. 'Speculum Vite Christi; or the myrroure of the blessyd Lyf of Jhesu Criste,' fol.

49. 'Directorium Sacerdotum: sive Ordinale secundum Usum Sarum,' Westm., fol.

50. 'The Worke (or Court) of Sapience,' composed by John Lydgate, fol.

51. 'A Boke of divers Ghostly Maters,' Westm., fol.

52. 'The Curial made by Maystre Alain Charretier,' translated from the French, fol.

53. 'The Lyf of our Lady, made by Dan John Lydgate, monke of Burye,' fol.

54. 'The Lyf of Saynt Wenefryde, reduced into Englisshe,' fol.

55. 'A Lytel Tretise, intytuled or named The Lucidarye,' 4to.

56. 'Reverendissimi viri dni. Gulielmi Lyndewodi, LLD. et epi Asaphensis constitutiones provinciales Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ,' 24mo.

57. 'The Hystorye of Kynge Blanchardyne and Queen Eglantyne his wyfe,' fol.

58. 'The Siege of the noble and invyncyble Cytee of Rhodes,' fol.

59. 'Statuta apud Westmonasterium edita, anno primo Regis Ricardi tercii,' fol.

60. 'Statutes' made in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Parliaments of Henry VII., folio. (The only fragment of this work known consists of two leaves.)

61. 'The Accidence' (mentioned in one of the sale catalogues of the library of T. Martin of Palgrave).

62. 'The Prouffytable Boke of mānes soule, called The Chastysing of Goddes Chyldern,' fol.

63. 'Horæ,' &c., 12mo., a fragment of eight pages, now at Oxford, in the library bequeathed to the Bodleian by the late F. Douce, Esq.

64. A fragment of a Ballad, preserved in a volume of scraps and ballads in the British Museum.

From the time of Caxton's press to that of Thomas Hacket, we have the enumeration of 2926 books in Dr. Dibdin's work. The 'Typographical Antiquities' of Ames and Herbert comes down to a later period. They recorded the names of three hundred and fifty printers in England and Scotland, or of foreign printers engaged in producing books for England, that flourished between 1474 and 1600. The same authors have ecorded the titles (we have counted with sufficient accuracy to make the assertion) of nearly 10,000 distinct works printed amongst us during the same period. Many of these works, however, were only single sheets; but on the other hand, there are doubtless many not here registered. Dividing the total number of books printed during these 130 years, we find that the average number of distinct works produced each year was 75.

APPENDIX C.

To avoid encumbering the preceding pages with foot-notes upon particular passages, the author subjoins a list of the principal books which he has referred to, or consulted, in this imperfect sketch of the Life of the Father of English Printing:—

'Typographical Antiquities, or an Historical Account of the Origin and Progress of Printing in Great Britain and Ireland.' By Joseph Ames and William Herbert. 3 vols. 4to., 1785.

The same. Now greatly enlarged, with copious notes. By the Rev. Thomas Frognall Dibdin. 4 vols. 4to., 1810.

'Biographia Britannica.' By Andrew Kippis. Article 'Caxton,' in vol. iii., 1784.

'Life of William Caxton.' Treatise, Library of Useful Knowledge, 1828.

'A Treatise on Wood Engraving, Historical and Practical.' With illustrations engraved on wood, by John Jackson, 1839.

'A Concise History of the Origin and Progress of Printing,' 1770.

'Introduction to the Literature of Europe.' By Henry Hallam. Vol. i., 1836.

'Philobiblion, a Treatise on the Love of Books.' By Richard de Bury. Translated by John B. Inglis, 1832.

'History of English Poetry.' By Thomas Warton. 4 vols. 8vo., 1824.

'The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer.' With an Essay on his Language and Versification, &c. By Thomas Tyrwhitt. 5 vols., 1830.

'Specimens of the Early English Poets,' to which is prefixed an 'Historical Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the

'English Poetry and Language.' By George Ellis. 3 vols., 1811.

'Illustrations of the Lives and Writings of Gower and Chaucer.' By the Rev. Henry J. Todd, 1810.

'Three Early English Metrical Romances.' Edited by John Robson, for the Camden Society. 1842.

'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.' By Thomas Percy. 3 vols., 1794.

'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.' By Sir Walter Scott. 'Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry,' 1833.

'Sir Thomas More, or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society.' By Robert Southey. 2 vols., 1831.

'Utopia.' Written in Latin by Sir Thomas More. Translated by Ralph Robinson. A new edition, by the Rev. T. F. Dibdin, 2 vols. 1808.

'The History of London.' By Thomas Maitland. 2 vols. folio, 1756.

'The New Chronicles of England and France.' By Robert Fabyan. Edited by Sir Henry Ellis. 2 vols. 4to., 1811.

'The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London.' By William Herbert. 2 vols. 8vo., 1834.

'Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster.' By John Stow. Augmented by John Strype. 2 vols. fol., 1720.

'Sir John Froissart's Chronicles.' Translated by Lord Berners. 2 vols. 4to. 1812.

'Memoirs of Philip de Comines.' Translated by Mr. Uvedale. 2 vols. 8vo., 1723.

'Paston Letters. Original Letters, written during the Reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III.' By Sir John Fenn. A new edition, by A. Ramsay. 2 vols., 1840.

'Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne.' Par M. de Barante. 10 vols. 8vo., 1836.

'Statutes of the Realm.' From original records and authentic manuscripts. Vol. ii., 1816.

'Memoirs of Wool,' &c. By John Smith. 2 vols., 1747.

'Extracts from the Issue Rolls of the Exchequer, Henry III. to Henry VI.' 1837.

'Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV.' Edited by John Bruce, for the Camden Society. 1838.

'Wardrobe Accounts of Edward the Fourth.' By Nicholas Harris Nicolas. 1830.

'Monasticon Anglicanum.' By Sir William Dugdale. Edition of 1817.

'Retrospective Review.' Vol. xv. Article, 'The Knight of the Tower's Advice to his Daughters.'

END OF PART I.

PART II.

THE MODERN PRESS.

THE MODERN PRESS.

CHAPTER I.

Cheap Popular Literature—Conditions of Cheapness—Popular Literature of Elizabeth's reign—Who were the readers.

THE history of Cheap Popular Literature is a long and instructive chapter of the history of the condition of the People. Before the invention of printing there was little literature that could be called popular, and none that could be called cheap. But in the very earliest stages of the press all books would be comparatively cheap, and all literature to a certain extent popular. Our first printer, as we regard his works, had a most especial eye to the largest number of readers. We have no record of the price of his books beyond the fact that one of them was sold for 6*s.* 8*d.*, a price equal to that of a quarter of wheat. But the subjects of his books, for the most part, show that he thought it his especial business to simplify knowledge, and to furnish reading for amusement. We can scarcely call any of his books learned. What there is of science in them was of a popular sort, and illustrated by diagrams. The histories were those of our old

legendary chronicles, as attractive even as the romances of chivalry which accompanied them. His poetry was chiefly that of one of the great minds whose essential attribute is that of universality. Caxton went to the largest number of readers that his age presented to him.

It is a remarkable characteristic of the first century of printing, not only in this country, but wherever a press was erected, that the highest and most constant efforts of the new art were addressed to the diffusion of the old stores of knowledge, rather than to an enlargement of the stores. The early professors of the art on the continent, in Germany, Italy, and France, were scholars who knew the importance of securing the world's inheritance of the knowledge of Greece and Rome from any further destruction, such as the scattered manuscripts of the ancient poets, orators, and historians had experienced, through neglect and ignorance. The press would put them fairly beyond the reach of any new waste. But after the first half-century of printing, when these manuscripts had been copied in type, and the public libraries and the princes and nobles of Europe had been supplied, a fresh want arose out of the satisfaction of the former want. Men of letters, who did not belong to the class of the rich, anxiously demanded copies of the ancient classics; and their demands were not made in vain. The Alduses, and Stephenses, and Plantins, did not hold it good to keep books dear for the advancement of letters; they anxiously de-

sired to make them cheap, and they produced, therefore, not expensive folios only, as their predecessors had done, but neat and compactly printed octavos and duodecimos, for the general market. The instant that they did this, the foundations of literature were widened and deepened. They probably at first overrated the demand; indeed, we know they did so, and they suffered in consequence. But the time was sure to come when their labours would be rewarded; and, at any rate, they were at once placed beyond a servile dependence upon patrons. When they had their customers in every great city and university, they did not wait for the approving nod of a pope or a cardinal before they began to print.

A new demand very soon followed upon the first demand for cheap copies of the ancient classics, and this was even more completely the demand of the people. The doctrines of the Reformation had proclaimed the Bible as the best spiritual guide and teacher, and the people would have Bibles. The first English Bible was bought up and burnt; those who bought the Bibles contributed capital for making new Bibles, and those who burnt the Bibles advertised them. The first printers of the Bible were, however, cautious; they did not see the number of readers upon which they were to rely for a sale. In 1540 Grafton printed but 500 copies of his complete edition of the Scriptures; and yet, so great was the rush to this new supply of the most important knowledge, that we have

existing 326 editions of the English Bible, or parts of the Bible, printed between 1526 and 1600.

The early English printers did not attempt what the continental ones were doing for the ancient classics. Down to 1540 no Greek book had appeared from an English press. Oxford had only printed a part of Cicero's Epistles; Cambridge, no ancient writer whatever: only three or four old Roman writers had been reprinted, at that period, throughout England. But a great deal was done for public instruction by the course which our early printers took; for, as one of them says, "Divers famous clerks and learned men translated and made many noble works into our English tongue, whereby there was much more plenty and abundance of English used than there was in times past." The English nobility were, probably, for more than the first half-century of English printing, the great encouragers of our press: they required translations and abridgments of the classics, versions of French and Italian romances, old chronicles, and helps to devout exercises. Caxton and his successors abundantly supplied these wants; and the impulse to most of their exertions was given by the growing demand for literary amusement on the part of the great. Caxton, as we have seen, speaking of his 'Boke of Eneydos,' says, "This present book is not for a rude uplandish man to labour therein, nor read it." But a great change was working in Europe; the "rude uplandish man," if he gave promise of talent, was sent to school. The priests

strove with the laity for the education of the people; and not only in Protestant but in Catholic countries, were schools and universities everywhere founded. Here, again, was a new source of employment for the press—A, B, C's, or Abseys, Primers, Catechisms, Grammars, Dictionaries, were multiplied in every direction. Books became, also, during this period, the tools of professional men. There were not many works of medicine, but a great many of law; and even the people required instruction in the ordinances they were called upon to obey, which they received in the form of proclamations.

The course of the early printers was based upon the principle that they could produce books cheaper by the press than by the scribe. This point once established, the next fact would be also clear—that the more impressions they printed the cheaper the book could be afforded. Beyond this great fact there was a difficulty. There would arise in their minds the same doubt which has puzzled all printers and booksellers from the time of Caxton to our times; which is at the bottom of all controversies about dear books and low-priced books at the present hour; and which will continue to perplex the producers of books, even should the entire population beyond infancy become readers, and have the means of purchasing books in some form or other. That question is simply a commercial one, and is perfectly independent of any schemes of public or private generosity for the enlightenment of the people; it is—Given the sub-

ject of a book, its mode of treatment, the celebrity or otherwise of its author, its amount of matter—what is the natural limit of its first sale, and the necessary ratio of its published price? If the probable demand be under-rated, there will be a high price, which will restrict the natural demand; and if over-rated, there will be a low price, which will curtail the natural profit. This is scarcely a question for enthusiasts for cheapness to decide, upon the broad assertion that a large sale of low-priced books will be more profitable than a small sale of high-priced books.

In 1825, Archibald Constable, then the great publisher, propounded to the then 'Great Unknown' his plan for revolutionising "the art and traffic of bookselling." He exhibited the annual schedule of assessed taxes, having reckoned the number of persons who paid for each separate article of luxury; and from that document he calculated that, if he produced every year "twelve volumes so good that millions must wish to have them, and so cheap that every butcher's callant may have them, if he please to let me tax him sixpence a week," he should sell them, "not by thousands or tens of thousands, but by hundreds of thousands—ay, by millions." It is recorded that a worthy divine, instructing his bookseller to publish a sermon of his composition, decided that at least twelve thousand should be the number printed, he having calculated that one copy would be required in each parish by the clergyman alone, to

say nothing of chance customers. These statistics were ingenious, but they were not safe guides. The callants did not consent to be taxed sixpence a week; and the rectors and curates did not rush to St. Paul's Churchyard to buy up the limited impression of the sermon.

But the Edinburgh publisher, and the rural divine, were nevertheless right in their endeavour to find some principle upon which they could determine the probable demand for a literary work. Constable proposed to himself the union of goodness and cheapness, to create a demand that (still using his own words) would have made him "richer than the possession of all the copyrights of all the quartos that ever were, or will be, hot-pressed." The goodness without the cheapness might have produced little change in the market; the cheapness without the goodness might have been more influential. But, with the truest combination of these qualities, there is nothing so easy or so common as to over-rate a demand in the commerce of books. The price of a book aspiring to the greatest popularity can only be settled by an estimate of the probable number of readers at any one time in the community, and by a still more difficult estimate of the sort of reading which is likely to interest the greatest number. The same difficulty arises with regard to every new book, and has always arisen. The amount of the "reading public," with its almost endless subdivisions, arising out of station, or age, or average intelligence, or

prevailing taste, is very difficult to be estimated in our own day; and there are not many authentic details ready to our hand upon which we can make an estimate for any past period. We will endeavour, out of these scanty landmarks, to collect some facts relating to the former state and progressive extension of the realms of print.

It is no modern discovery that a book cheap enough for the many amongst reading people to buy, and at the same time a book which the many would have a strong desire to buy, would be more advantageous to the manufacturer of books than a dear book which the few only could buy, and which the few only would desire to buy. There is preserved, in the handwriting of Christopher Barker, in 1582, 'A Note of the offices and other special licences for printing granted by her Majesty, with a conjecture of their valuation.'* This worthy printer to the Queen probably a little under-rated his own gains, when he says that the whole Bible requires so great a cost, that his predecessors kept the realm twelve years without venturing a single edition, but that he had desperately adventured to print four in a year and a half, expending about 3000*l.*, to the certain ruin of his wife and family if he had died in the time. Of these four editions, three were in folio, and one in quarto. The sale of the folios would necessarily be limited by the cost, in the way that the same unhappy patentee complains of as to his Book of

* Archæologia, vol. xxv. page 100, &c.

Common Prayer, "which few or none do buy except the minister." But how stands the sale of smaller and less expensive books? Mr. Daye prints the Psalms in metre, which book, "being occupied of all sorts of men, women, and children, and requiring no great stock for the furnishing thereof, is therefore gainful." The small Catechism is "also a profitable copy, for that it is general." Mr. Seres prints the Morning and Evening Prayer, with the Collects and the Litany; and where poor Mr. Barker sells one Book of Common Prayer, "he (Seres) furnisheth the whole parishes throughout the realm, which are commonly a hundred to one." But with all his laments and jealousies, Queen Elizabeth's printer, in those anti-commercial days, had hit the sound principle that is at the root of the commerce of books. There is one of the printers, he says, whose patent contains all dictionaries in all tongues, all chronicles and histories whatsoever; and his position is thus described: —"If he print competent numbers of each to maintain his charges, all England, Scotland, and much more, were not able to utter them; and if he should print but a few of each volume, the prices would be exceedingly great, and he in more danger to be undone than likely to gain." Here are the Scylla and Charybdis of the book-trade. Let "all good books on their first appearance appeal to the needy multitude," says one adviser. Mr. Barker answers, "All England, Scotland, and much more, were not able to utter them." "Let the rich and luxurious

be first addressed," say the old traditional believers that dearness and excellence are synonymous. Mr. Barker answers—"Print but a few of each volume, at exceedingly high prices, and there is more danger of ruin than gain."

The Note of Christopher Barker to Lord Burghley is an answer to a complaint that had been made in 1582, that the privileges granted to members of the Stationers' Company "will be the overthrow of the printers and stationers within this city, being in number one hundred and seventy-five, and thereby the excessive prices of books prejudiciable to the state of the whole realm." In the absence of any knowledge of the numbers printed of a book, and of its consequent price, at the time of this complaint against the monopolists of charging "excessive prices," it may enable us to form some estimate of the character of the books issued in 1582, and thence of the quality of the readers of books, if we glance at two other sources of information—Ames and Herbert's 'Typographical Antiquities,' and Mr. Collier's 'Extracts from the Registers of the Stationers' Company.' The latter is especially valuable, as showing what was doing in the most popular literature—the literature of ballads and broadsides, of marvellous adventures and merry tales—which matters Ames and Herbert rejected in a great degree.

In the twenty-fifth year of Queen Elizabeth then, we learn that the printers of London had a good deal of work to do, in the production of

Bibles, Testaments, and Prayer-books—of A B C's, Primers, and Catechisms; of divinity, chiefly controversial; of almanacs and prognostications; of Latin books for grammar-schools; of grammars and dictionaries; of statutes and law-books. This was the staple work of the press, which had been going on from the beginning of the century, and constantly increasing. We learn from the 'Privy-purse Accounts of Elizabeth of York,' that, in 1505, twenty pence were paid for a Primer and a Psalter. This sum was equal to a week's wages of a labourer in husbandry. The Primer and the Psalter were scarcely for the labourer. In 1516 'Fitzherbert's Grand Abridgment,' then first published, cost the lawyer forty shillings—a price equal to the expense of a week's commons for all the students of Fitzherbert's inn. No doubt a century of printing in England had greatly lowered the price of all books that were essential instruments in the learned professions, or for the conduct of school education. But in the reign of Elizabeth the class of general readers had arisen; a class far more extensive than that of the clerks and noble gentlemen to whom our first printers addressed their translations of the classics, their French and Italian romances, their 'Gesta Romanorum,' their old chronicles, and their early poetry. It was a time of travel and adventure. In this year, 1582, we find printed 'Discovery and Conquest of the East Indies,' 'Discovery and Conquest of the Provinces of Peru, and also of the rich Mines of Potosi,' 'Divers Voyages touching

the Discovery of America' (Hakluyt), 'Acts and Gests of the Spaniards in the West Indies,' 'State of Flanders and Portugal.' 'A Discourse in commendation of Sir Francis Drake' had appeared in 1581. Frobisher had received his poetical 'Welcome Home,' by Churchyard, in 1579. Of historical works, we have none printed in 1582, with the exception of 'The Life, Acts, and Death of the most noble, valiant, and renowned Prince Arthur,' which the readers of all classes would receive with undoubting mind as an authentic record. But solid books of history had very recently been produced. Holinshed had published his 'Chronicles;' Guicciardini had been translated by Jeffrey Fenton, and Herodotus by B. R.

The rude historical Drama was then just arising to familiarise the people with their country's annals. In ten more years the press would teem with play-books; for the triumphant era was approaching of those who, in 1579, Stephen Gosson denounced to uttermost perdition in his 'Pleasant invective against poets, pipers, jesters, and such-like caterpillars of a commonwealth.' That species of popular literature is almost absent from the Registers of 1582; but the materials upon which much of the romantic drama is founded were familiar to the readers of this period. Who were the readers, we may judge from the titles of some of these novels. One will indicate a class:—'The Wonderful Adventures of Simonides, gathered as well for the instruc tion of our noble young gentlemen as our honour-

able courtly ladies.' The translators and writers of these romances seem to have had no notion of a class of readers beyond the circle of the rich and the high-born. Sidney's 'Arcadia' is called 'The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia;' and in his Dedication to "My dear Lady and Sister," he says, "It is done only for you, and to you; * * * for indeed for severer eyes it is not, being but a trifle, and that triflingly handled." A few years after came Robert Greene, and other writers of imagination, who were equally starved in writing plays for the stage-managers and stories for the stationers. Greene's 'Pandosto,' afterwards called 'Dorastus and Fawnia,' is a small quarto of 56 pages, in which Shakspere found the story of 'The Winter's Tale.' The author describes this novelet as "pleasant for age to avoid dreary thoughts; profitable for youth to eschew other wanton pastimes; and bringing to both a desired content." He dedicates it "To the Gentlemen Readers, Health;" and to these "Gentlemen" he says, "If any condemn my rashness for troubling your ears with so many unlearned pamphlets, I will straight shroud myself under the shadow of your courtesies." The scholar was addressing the "gentlemen" of the Inns of Court and of the Universities. He was looking to a ruder class of readers when, in 1591, he published 'A Notable Discovery of Cosenage,' having himself, as he confesses, kept villainous company. This tract he addresses "To the young Gentlemen, Merchants, Apprentices, Farmers, and plain Countrymen."

Here is a great extension of the reading public: but we have some doubts if Greene's tract ever reached "Farmers and plain Countrymen." The question arises, how were books to be circulated in the provinces? It was more than a century later before some of the largest towns, such as Birmingham, had their booksellers. The pedlers who kept the fairs and markets were the booksellers of the early days of the press. The last new pamphlet travelled into the country in the same pack with the last new ruff; it travelled many miles, and found few buyers. And yet for some popular books the demand was not contemptible. Sir Thomas Challoner translated 'The Praise of Folly,' of Erasmus, which was published in 1577; and the Stationers' Company stipulated with the publisher that he should print "not above 1500 of any impression," and that "any of the Company may lay on with him, reasonably, at every impression." Mr. Collier, who gives this curious extract from "the Stationers' Registers," thinks that this meant "sharing the profits." It meant that whilst the sheets were at press any member of the Company might print off a reasonable number for his own sale. To "lay on" is still a technical term in printing. Challoner's Erasmus was an amusing book for the scholar, and had, no doubt, a special sale amongst teachers and students. Philip Stubbes, in his 'Anatomy of Abuses,' first published in 1583, bitterly complains that "pamphlets of toys and babbleries corrupt men's minds and pervert good wits;"

and he especially laments that such books, being "better esteemed and more vendible than the godliest and sagest books that be," have caused "that worthy Book of Martyrs, made by that famous father and excellent instrument in God his Church, Master John Foxe, so little to be accepted." We might have concluded that, even in those days of limited bookselling, the great popular book of the 'Acts and Monuments' would have had an universal sale, with its wonderful woodcuts and its deep interest for the bulk of the people. But when its excitement was simply historical, two centuries afterwards, the same book would be found in many a peasant's cottage, for the sole reason that it might be purchased in small portions by a periodical outlay. Whilst the wares of worthy John Fox were sleeping in the bookseller's warehouse, the people were buying their 'Almanacs and Prognostications,' which Christopher Barker, speaking of their patentee, calls "a pretty commodity towards an honest man's living." They were buying, in this year of 1582, 'The Dial of Destiny,' an astrological treatise; 'The Examination and Confession of Witches;' 'The Execution of Edmund Campion, the Jesuit;' 'The Interpretation of Dreams;' 'A Treatise of the rare and strange Wonders seen in the Air.' They were buying 'A Ballad of the Lamentation of a modest Maiden being deceitfully forsaken;' 'A Ballad entitled 'Now we go, of the Papists' new overthrow;' 'The picture of two pernicious Varlets, called Prig Pickthank and Clem Clawback;' 'A

Ballad entitled a doleful Ditty, declaring the unfortunate hap of two faithful friends, the one went out of her wits and the other for sorrow died.' They were buying story-books in prose and rhyme, —accounts of murders and treasons, of fires and earthquakes,—and songs, "old and plain." The Court had its 'Euphues, very pleasant for all gentlemen to read;' and the City its mirror of Court manners, entitled 'How a young gentleman may behave himself in all companies.'

If we look very broadly at the character of the popular literature of the middle period of the reign of Elizabeth, and compare it with the popular literature of our own day, we shall find that the differences are more in degree than in kind. We have purposely selected the period before the uprising of our great dramatic literature, which must have had a prodigious effect upon the intellectual condition of the people. There was a great deal of training going forward in the grammar-schools for the sons of tradesmen, and of the more opulent cultivators; but the rudiments of knowledge were not accessible to the labourers in rural districts, and the inferior handicraftsmen. There was, probably, no great distinction in the acquirements of the gentry and the burgesses. Some read with a real desire for information; some for mere amusement. Newspapers were not as yet. In the country house where reading was an occupation, there was Hall's 'Chronicle,' and Stow's 'Chronicle,' and, may be, his rival Grafton's; there was

Painter's 'Palace of Pleasure,' Tusser's 'Five Hundred Points of good Husbandry,' and, though Philip Stubbes denies its popularity, Fox's 'Book of Martyrs.' Chaucer and Gower had become obsolete in the courtly circles; but Surrey, and Sackville, and Gascoigne were dozed over after the noontide dinner. The peers and commoners who came to Court and Parliament bought the new Travels and Discoveries, and carried them into the country, for the solace of many a long winter evening's curiosity about "antres vast and deserts idle." The Greek and Roman classics were becoming somewhat popularly known through translations. But it is tolerably clear that much of the light reading, and most of the cheapest books, were rubbish spun over and over again out of the novels of Bandello, and Boccaccio, and Boisteau, and losing their original elegance in hasty and imperfect translations. The taste for such reading received its best counteraction when the stage became a noble instrument of popular instruction; and when those who did not frequent the theatres had a wondrous store of exciting fiction opened to them by a few plays of Shakspere and many more of his contemporaries. It was in vain that puritanism, such as that of Prynne, denounced "the ordinary reading of Comedies, Tragedies, Arcadias, Amorous Histories, Poets," as unlawful. They held their empire till civil war came to put an end to most home-studies, except that of party and polemical pamphlets. But even in the tempestuous times

that preceded the great outbreak, Sir Henry Wotton, quoting the saying of a Frenchman, laments that "his country was much the worse by old men studying the venom of policy, and young men ading the dregs of fancy."

CHAPTER II.

Imperfect Civilisation—Reading during the Civil Wars—Reading after the Restoration—French Romances—First London Catalogue, 1680—Authors and Booksellers—Subscription Books—Books in Numbers—The Canvassing System.

In a condition of society which may be characterised as that of a very imperfect civilisation—when communication is difficult, and in some cases impossible; when the influence of the capital upon the provinces is very partial and uncertain; when knowledge is for the most part confined to the learned professions—we must regard the rich upper classes precisely in the same relation to popular literature as we now regard the poor lower classes. We must view them as essentially uncritical and unrefined, swallowing the coarsest intellectual food with greediness, looking chiefly to excitement and amusement in books, and not very willingly elevating themselves to mental improvement as a great duty. When Ben Jonson speaks of the "prerogative the vulgar have to lose their judgments, and like that which is naught"—when he derides the taste of "the beast the multitude"—he also takes care to tell us that his description of those who "think rude things greater than polished," not only applied to "the sordid multitude, but to the neater sort of our gallants: for all are the multitude; only they differ in clothes, not in judgment

or understanding."* About the time when Jonson wrote thus—more calmly than when he denounced "the loathed stage, and the more loathsome age"—Burton was exhibiting the intellectual condition of the gentry in his 'Anatomy of Melancholy:'—"I am not ignorant how barbarously and basely for the most part our ruder gentry esteem of libraries and books; how they neglect and contemn so great a treasure, so inestimable a benefit, as Æsop's cock did the jewel he found in the dunghill; and all through error, ignorance, and want of education." Again, he says, "If they read a book at any time, 'tis an English chronicle, St. Huon of Bordeaux, Amadis de Gaul, &c., a play-book, or some pamphlet of news; and that at such seasons only when they cannot stir abroad." The "pamphlet of news" was a prodigious ingredient in the queer cauldron of popular literature for the next half-century. Every one has heard of the thirty thousand tracts in the British Museum, forming two thousand volumes, all published between 1640 and 1660. The impression of many of these was probably very small; for Rushworth, to whom they became authorities, tells us that King Charles I. gave ten pounds for the liberty to read one at the owner's house in St. Paul's Churchyard. This was the twenty years' work of Milton's "pens and heads, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas." Others were, "as fast reading, trying all things." Milton asks,

* Discoveries.

"What could a man require more from a nation so pliant and so prone to seek after knowledge?" He truly answers: "wise and faithful labourers, to make a knowing people, a nation of prophets, sages, and worthies."* The "wise and faithful labourers" were scarcely to be found in the civil and ecclesiastical violence of these partisan writers. But they were the pioneers of constitutional liberty; and till that fabric was built up, literature, properly so called, would offer few things great or enduring. The demand for books in that stormy period was, doubtless, very limited. The belief that the Εικὼν Βασιλικὴ was written by Charles I. would naturally account for the sale of fifty editions in one year. But from 1623 to 1664 only two editions of Shakspere were sold; and when the Restoration came, an act of Parliament was passed that only twenty printers should practise their art in the kingdom. The fact, as recorded by Evelyn, that at the fire of London, in 1666, the booksellers who carried on their business in the neighbourhood of St. Paul's lost as many books, in quires, as were worth 200,000*l.*, is rather a proof of a slow demand than of the enormous extent of bookselling. In the vaults of Saint Faith's were rotting many a copy of what the world has agreed to call "heavy" books; books in advance of their time; books that no price would have made largely saleable—the books for the few.

The terrible quarter of a century that had pre-

* Areopagitica.

ceded the Restoration, and the new tastes which the return of the Stuarts brought to England, would seem to have swept away even the remembrances of the popular literature of Elizabeth and James. Edward Phillips, the nephew of Milton, has a remarkable passage with reference to the poets; "As for the antiquated and fallen into obscurity from their former credit and reputation, they are for the most part those who have written beyond the verge of the present age; for let us look back as far as about thirty or forty years, and we shall find a profound silence of the poets beyond that time, except of some few dramatics, of whose real worth the interest of the now flourishing stage cannot but be sensible."* This was written in 1674. What had the people to read who had forgotten Spenser, and Daniel, and Drayton; and Herbert—who knew little of Shakspere, except in the translations of Davenant and Dryden; and who, unquestionably, had small relish for the popular prose of another age, such as Bacon's 'Essays'? They had rhyming tragedies; they had obscene comedies; they had their Sedleys and Rochesters. It is not wonderful that the popular taste soon grew corrupted. Pepys says (1666), "To Deptford by water, reading Othello, Moor of Venice, which I ever heretofore esteemed a mighty good play; but having so lately read The Adventures of Five Hours, it seems a mean thing." Their "light reading" was a marvel—that romance litera-

* Theatrum Poetarum, Preface.

ture which at one time was as popular in its degree as the shilling novel of our own day. We have before us Mr. Samuel Speed's Catalogue of Books, printed for him in 1670. 'The first is 'Pharamond, the famed Romance, written by the author of those other two eminent volumes Cassandra and Cleopatra.' These famed and eminent volumes are large folios, translated from the French of M. de la Calprenede. If Calprenede was the Dumas, Madeleine Scudery was the Eugene Sue of those days. No popularity that these moderns have obtained by their *feuilletons* could have exceeded the excitement produced here, as well as in France, by the wonderful folios of their predecessors. 'Artamenes' and 'Clelia,' to say nothing of 'Almahide' and 'The Illustrious Bassa,' were in every mansion of the ladies of quality. The matron and her daughters sate at their embroidery while the companion read aloud, night after night, a page or two of these interminable adventures, in which Greeks and Romans talked the language of the *Grand Monarque;* and the intrigues of the court, and the characters of its personages, were mysteriously shadowed forth in what were called "*Portraits.*" What signified that they were stupid? They were as level to the comprehension of their high-born readers as the penny novels of the present day are to the intelligence of the factory-girl. They had a long popularity, and were reprinted again and again, in their eight or ten volumes, when the age of duodecimos had arrived. They had been fa-

shionable, and that was enough. Character they had none, and very little of human passions. They were constructed upon the admirable recipe of Molière in the 'Précieuses Ridicules'—a lover without feeling; a mistress without preference; mutual insensibility; sedulous attention to forms; a declaration in a garden; the banishment of the lover by the coquetting fair; perseverance; timid confessions; rivals; persecutions of fathers; jealousies conceived under false appearances; laments; despairs; abductions; and all that. Mammas thought they were wisely instructing their daughters, when they permitted Mademoiselle Scudery to teach them "des règles dont, en bonne galanterie, on ne saurait se dispenser." In vain Molière, and Boileau, and Scarron laughed at the great heroic romances. They held their own till Le Sage in France, and Defoe and Fielding in England, spoke the language of real life. They show us how long the great and little vulgar will feed upon husks, till some real fruit is offered to them. But it is remarkable how, in the same age, works of real genius and works of intense dulness will run side by side. It may be a question how far 'Don Quixote' drove out the romances of chivalry. 'Tartufe,' and 'Le Malade Imaginaire' were of the same era as that of the wonderful productions in which Cyrus was talking *galanterie* to Mandane through a thousand folio pages. When Pepys thought 'Othello' a mean thing compared with 'The Adventures of Five Hours,' he also bought

"Hudibras, both parts, the book now in greatest fashion for drollery;" but he tells us his honest mind when he says, "I cannot, I confess, see enough where the wit lies." Voltaire had a different standard of taste when he wrote, "I never met with so much wit in one single book as in this." The politics of 'Hudibras' made it "in greatest fashion;" the wit shot over the heads of the idle, dissipated, slavish, and corrupt courtiers who gave it their patronage, but eventually left its author to starve. Butler became popular in another generation; and so did Milton. The first edition of 'Paradise Lost' sufficed for a circulation of seven years.

The earliest Catalogue of Books published in this country contains a list of "all the books printed in England since the dreadful fire, 1666, to the end of Trinity term, 1680." The statistical results of this catalogue of the productions of the press for fourteen years have been ascertained by us. The whole number of books printed was 3550; of which 947 were divinity, 420 law, and 153 physic; 397 were school-books, and 253 on subjects of geography and navigation, including maps. About one-half of these books were single sermons and tracts. Deducting the reprints, pamphlets, single sermons, and maps, we have estimated that, upon an average, 100 new books were produced in each year.

About the time when this catalogue was published, John Dunton, one of the most eccentric,

and perhaps therefore amusing, of the publishing race, went into business with half a shop. He can tell us something of the manufacture of some of these books of the London catalogue. He says; "Printing was now uppermost in my thoughts; and hackney authors began to ply me with specimens as earnestly, and with as much passion and concern, as the watermen do passengers with oars and sculls." He adds, "As for their honesty, 'tis very remarkable. They'll either persuade you to go upon another man's copy, to steal his thought, or to abridge his books which should have got him bread for his lifetime."* There were varieties of this class:—"Mr. Bradshaw was the best accomplished hackney author I have met with; his genius was quite above the common size, and his style was incomparably fine." Dunton had a suspicion that Bradshaw wrote 'The Turkish Spy,' which might justify somewhat of his eulogium. Roger North says that "the demi-booksellers," who deal in "the fresh scum of the press," are such as "crack their brains to find out selling subjects, and keep hirelings in garrets, at hard meat, to write and correct by the great; and so puff up an octavo to a sufficient thickness, and there is six shillings current for an hour and a half's reading, and perhaps never to be read or looked upon after." The people get these wares cheaper now. The publishers of that day, and long afterwards, were not very nice as to the uniform excellence of the books

* Dunton's 'Life and Errors,' ed. 1705, p. 70.

they issued. Dunton informs us that Mr. William Rogers, who was the publisher of Sherlock and Tillotson, was concerned in publishing "some Dying Speeches." They had books for all tastes, and carried their goods to many markets. They were equally at home in Cheapside or at Sturbridge fair; and the great Bernard Lintot exhibited his "rubric posts" in his shop, and kept a booth on the Thames when it was frozen over. Some, according to Dunton, were "pirates and cormorants;" others, who had "the intimate acquaintance of several excellent pens, could never want copies." Some were good at "projection"—the devisers of "selling subjects;" and the talent of some "lies at collection," which Dunton exemplifies by Mr. Crouch, who "melted down the best of our English histories into twelvepenny books, which are filled with wonders, rarities, and curiosities." One, who "printed The Flying Post, did often fill it with stolen copies;" whilst Jacob Tonson, who paid Dryden like a safe tradesman as he was, and made him presents of melons and sherry, is very indignant that the great poet charged him fifty guineas for fourteen hundred and forty-six lines, when he expected to have had fifteen hundred and eighteen lines for forty guineas. Peace to their manes! They were all doing something towards the supply of that great want which was beginning to assert itself somewhat extensively in their day. They were, for the most part, rugged dealers in wares intellectual. They had many modes of turning a

penny beyond the profits which they derived, as publishers, from "the great genius," or "the eminent hand," which each patronised. They had some difficulties in their way as manufacturers; although the more cautious and lucky did make fortunes. The more limited the public, the more uncertain the demand. They were pretty safe with their tracts, and their abridgments, and their new comedies; but when they had to deal with works of learning, which were necessarily costly, they and their authors —for the authors had often to sustain the charges of printing—encountered serious losses. We shall see how, as the commerce of books extended, new measures were adopted to lessen, if not to remove, the risk.

Amongst the 'Calamities of Authors' there are many touching records of

> "Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty,"

produced by printing books that met with no ready sale. Purchas was ruined by his 'Pilgrimes;' Castell by his 'Lexicon Heptaglotton;' Ockley by his 'History of the Saracens;' Rushworth by his 'Historical Collections.' Bishop Kennett gave away his 'Register and Chronicle,' saying, "The volume, too large, brings me no profit." The remedy was to be found in publishing by subscription. This plan, like most other human things, was subject to abuse; but it was founded upon a true estimate of the peculiar risks of publishing. It is manifest that, if a certain number of persons unite in agree-

ment to purchase a book which is about to be printed, the author may be at ease with regard to the issue of the enterprise, and the subscribers ought to receive what they want at a lower cost than when risk enters into price. For more than half a century nearly all the great books were published by subscription; and the highest in literature felt no degradation in canvassing themselves with their "subscription receipts." It is easy to perceive, by the subscription prices, when the work was set on foot by an author, or his friends, simply as a more convenient mode of obtaining or bestowing money than begging or borrowing; and when there was a real market value given for the commodity offered. The scheme of levying contributions upon subscribers was as old as the days of Taylor, the Water Poet. He published his 'Pennilesse Pilgrimage' in this fashion; and it seems that he sometimes gave his books to those who were unwilling to return his honorarium. He consoles himself by a lampoon against his false subscribers:—

> "They took a book worth twelvepence, and were bound
> To give a crown, an angel, or a pound;
> A noble, piece, or half-piece, what they list,—
> They past their words, or freely set their list."

Honest John had sixteen hundred and fifty such subscribers; but of these, seven hundred and fifty were "bad debtors."* In the next century, Myles Davies has the same story to tell of the degradation of the literary begging-letter writer. He leaves his

* 'A Kicksey Wiusey.'

books at the great man's door; he writes letter upon letter, "with fresh odes upon his graceship, and an account where I lived, and what noblemen had accepted of my present." He walks before the "parlour-window," and "advances to address his grace to remember the poor author." At last his parcel of books is returned to him unopened, "with half-a-guinea upon top of the cargo," and "with desire to receive no more." Heaven, in its mercy, has relieved the tribe from these heartbreaking disgraces. There may be "the fear that kills," but there is no longer the patron who starves. Goldsmith has described the devices and the abasement of the little man in the coffee-house, who "drew out a bundle of proposals, begging me to subscribe to a new edition he was going to give the world of Propertius, with notes." His plans were more ingenious and diversified than those of Myles Davies: "I first besiege their hearts with flattery, and then pour in my proposals at the breach. If they subscribe readily the first time, I renew my request to beg a dedication fee. If they let me have that, I smite them once more for engraving their coat-of-arms at the top." Forty years after Myles Davies, Samuel Johnson was enduring the anxieties attendant upon the subscription plan, although friends stood between the author and the customer. He writes to Burney in 1758, "I have likewise enclosed twelve receipts (for Shakspere); not that I mean to impose upon you the trouble of pushing them with more importunity than may seem proper," &c.

Long was the subscribed Shakspeare delayed; and the proud struggling man had to bear Churchill's malignity, as well as the reproaches of his own sense of honour:—

> "He for subscribers baits his hook,
> And takes your cash; but where's the book?"

Well might Johnson write, in more prosperous times, "He that asks subscription soon finds that he has enemies. All who do not encourage him, defame him." Johnson and his publishers set no price upon their books, as a gratuity to the author, beyond their common market value. But great men had gone before them, who regulated their subscription prices by a higher estimate of the value of their works. Steele had received a guinea an octavo volume for the re-publication of 'The Tatler;' Pope had six guineas for his six quarto volumes of 'The Iliad;'—"a sum," says Johnson, "according to the value of money at that time, by no means inconsiderable." The subscription to Pope's 'Shakspeare' was also six guineas for six volumes. Johnson's projected translation of Paul Sarpi's 'History of the Council of Trent' was only to be charged twopence a sheet. That seems to have been the ordinary price of subscription books during the first half of the eighteenth century. Du Halde's 'China,' which appears to have required a great deal of what "the trade" call "pushing," was advertised by Cave at three halfpence a sheet; besides the attraction of a complicated lottery-scheme, with marvellous prizes. When the subscribers to a new book

were served, the remaining copies were sold, generally at superior rates. Sometimes, in the case of high-priced works, the unsold copies lay quiet through the mildew of a quarter of a century in the book-seller's warehouse. At Tonson's sale, in 1767, Pope's six-guinea Shakspeare had fallen to sixteen shillings for the hundred and forty copies then sold as a "remainder."* Many of the subscription books were remarkably profitable. The gains of Pope upon his 'Iliad' are minutely recorded in his Life by Johnson. Lintot paid the expense of the subscription copies, and gave the poet two hundred pounds a volume in addition. Lintot looked for his remuneration to an edition in folio. The project was knocked on the head by a reprint in Holland, in duodecimo; which edition was clandestinely imported, as in the recent days of French editions of Byron and Scott. Lintot took a wise course. He went at once to the general public with editions in duodecimo, at half-a-crown a volume, of which he very soon sold seven thousand five hundred copies. But it may well be doubted if Pope would have made five thousand three hundred pounds, if he had originally gone, without the quarto subscription process, to the buyers of duodecimos. Perhaps even the duodecimos would not have sold extensively without the reputation of the quartos. There was no great reading public to make a fortune for the poet out of small profits upon large sales. Some

* 'Gentleman's Magazine,' vol. lvii., quoted in Nicholls' 'Literary Anecdotes,' vol. v. p. 597.

may think that Pope would have been as illustrious without the ease which this fortune gave him. It may be so. But of one thing we are clear—that in every age the higher rewards of authorship, reaped by one eminent individual, are benefits to the great body of authors; and thus that the villa at Twickenham had a certain influence in making what the world called "Grub-street" less despicable and more thriving. It dissociated authorship from garrets. Yet it is marvellous, even now, how some of the race of attorneys and stockbrokers turn up their eyes when they hear of a successful writer keeping a brougham, and lament, over their claret, that such men will be improvident.

In those days of subscription books there were great contrasts of success and loss; of steady support and capricious neglect. Conyers Middleton made a little fortune by his 'Life of Cicero,' in two volumes quarto, published in 1741. His suspected heterodoxy was no bar to his success. Carte, in 1747, printed three thousand copies of the first volume of his 'General History of England,' for which he had adequate support. In that unlucky volume his Jacobitism peeped out, in a relation of an astonishing cure for the king's-evil, produced by the touch of the first Pretender, who, he says, "had not at that time been crowned or anointed." Away went the "remainder" of the three thousand volumes to the trunk-maker, and of the subsequent volumes only seven hundred and fifty were printed. Whether by subscription, or by the mode of fixing

a published price for a general sale,—which, in the second half of the century, was superseding the attempt to ascertain the number of purchasers before publication, — there was always a great amount of caprice, or prejudice, in the unripe public judgment of a book, which rendered its fate very hazardous and uncertain. Hume, in 1754, published the first volume of his 'History of England.' He says, "Mr. Millar told me that in a twelvemonth he sold only forty-five copies of it." Gibbon published the first volume of his 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire' in 1776: "I am at a loss," he modestly tells us, "how to describe the success of the work without betraying the vanity of the writer. The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; and the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin." Thomson's 'Seasons' was lying as waste paper in the publisher's shop, when one Mr. Whatley purchased a copy; and his authority in the coffee-houses brought it into notice. Collins was not so fortunate. His 'Odes' would not sell. He repaid the bookseller the price he had received for the copyright, settled for the printing, and burnt the greater part of the impression.

We have put together some of these scattered facts, to show how difficult was the publication of books before a great general public had been raised up to read and purchase, and how the risk

of expensive works was sought to be lessened by taking hostages against evil fortune. The subdivision of large books into weekly or monthly numbers was one of the expedients that was early resorted to for attracting purchasers. Some curious relations of the first days of number-publishing are given in a rare pamphlet by the Rev. Thomas Stackhouse, the author of the well-known 'History of the Bible.' In 1732 two booksellers, Mr. Wilford and Mr. Edlin, "when the success of some certain things published weekly set every little bookseller's wits to work," proposed to this poor curate of Finchley "to write something which might be published weekly, but what it was they knew not." At the Castle Tavern, in Paternoster Row, the trio deliberated upon the "something" that was to have a run. Edlin was for a "Roman History, brushing up Ozell's dull style, when the old thing would still do in a weekly manner." Wilford was for 'Family Directors.' Stackhouse proposed the 'New History of the Bible.' Wilford backed out; Edlin and Stackhouse quarrelled. The divine wanted many works of commentators and critics. The bookseller maintained "that the chief of his subscribers lived in Southwark, Wapping, and Ratcliff Highway; that they had no notion of critics and commentators; that the work would be adapted to their capacity, and therefore the less learning in it the better." Stackhouse got out of the hands of this encourager of letters, found another publisher, and prospered; as well as

he could, upon the subscriptions to his "four sheets of original matter for sixpence." * Many of the number-books were published under fictitious names of authors; and some actual authors, clerical and lay, lent their names to works of which they never saw a line. One of the most accomplished of the number-book writers was Dr. Robert Sanders, a self-created LL.D. He produced Histories of England, in folio and quarto, under various names. He was the writer of the Notes to the edition of the Bible, published in 1773, under the honoured name of Dr. Henry Southwell. The ingenious note-writer has told the story without reservation:—"As I was not a clergyman, my name could not be prefixed to it. Application was made to several clergymen for the use of their names; and at last Henry Southwell, LL.D., granted his." In a year or two the indefatigable Sanders was ready with a scheme for a larger commentary. He found a Doctor who would lend his name for a hundred pounds; but such a sum was out of the question. A mere A.M. was purchased for twenty pounds; but the affair broke down. The commentator relates that he was told by the proprietors "they had no further occasion for my services, and even denied me my week's wages." We hope the laborious Sanders was less scurvily treated by the publishers of that immortal work of his, which has been the glory of the number-trade even up to this hour, namely, 'The Newgate Calendar, or

* See Nicholls' 'Literary Anecdotes,' vol. ii. p. 394.

Malefactor's Bloody Register.' How many fortunes have been made out of this great storehouse of popular knowledge is of little consequence to society. It may be of importance to consider how many imps of fame have here studied the path to glory. Sanders had a rival—the Rev. Mr. Villette, ordinary of Newgate—who published the 'Annals of Newgate, or Malefactor's Register,' &c., "intended as a beacon to warn the rising generation against the temptations, the allurements, and the dangers of bad company." In this title-page "the celebrated John Sheppard," and "the equally celebrated Margaret Caroline Rudd," are leading attractions. The author of the 'Annals,' no doubt, prospered better than he of the 'Calendar.'

Poor wretched Sanders, during the period when he was correcting Lord Lyttleton's 'History of Henry II.,' had "a weekly subsistence;" but in 1768 he writes, "During these six weeks I have not tasted one whole meal of victuals at a time."* The original race of number-publishers had no very exalted notion of the value of literary labour. Their successors had no will to bestow any payment upon literature at all, while they had the old stores to produce and reproduce. They have now been forced into some few attempts at originality. But the employment of new authorship is a rare exception to their ordinary course. When the necessity does arise, there is always perturbation of mind. In a moment of despair, when his press was standing

* Nicholls' 'Literary Anecdotes,' vol. ii. p. 730, and vol. iii. p. 760.

still for some of that manuscript which, in an unlucky hour, he had bargained for with a living writer, one of this fraternity exclaimed, "Give me dead authors, they never keep you waiting for copy!" Many good books have, however, been produced by the early number-publishers. We may mention Chambers' 'Cyclopædia,' Smollett's 'History of England,' and Scott's 'Bible.' Some well-printed books are still being produced, but the compilers help themselves freely to what others have dearly paid for. Taken as a whole, they are the least improved, and certainly they are the dearest books, in the whole range of popular literature. The system upon which they are sold is essentially that of forcing a sale; and the necessary cost of this forcing, called "canvassing," is sought to be saved in the quantity of the article "canvassed," or in the less obvious degradation of its quality. The "canvasser" is an universal genius, and he must be paid as men of genius ought to be paid. He has to force off the commonest of wares by the most ingenious of devices. It is not the intrinsic merit of a book that is to command a sale, but the exterior accomplishments of the salesman. He adapts himself to every condition of person with whom he is thrown into contact. As in Birmingham and other great towns there is a beggars' register, which describes the susceptibilities of the families at whose gates beggars call, even to the particular theological opinions of the occupants, so the canvasser has a

pretty accurate account of the households within his beat. He knows where there is the customer in the kitchen, and the customer in the parlour. He sometimes has a timid colloquy with the cook in the passage; sometimes takes a glass of ale in the servants' hall; and, when he can rely upon the charms of his address, sends his card boldly into the drawing-room. No refusal can prevent him in the end leaving his number for inspection. The system is most rife in North and Midland England; it is not so common in the agricultural South, although it might be an instrument of diffusing sound knowledge amongst a scattered population. If an effort were honestly made to publish works really cheap, because intrinsically good, upon "the canvassing system," that system, which has many real advantages, might be redeemed from the disgrace which now too often attaches to it, in the hands of the quacks who are most flourishing in that line.

The number-trade was a necessary offshoot of that periodical literature which sprang up into importance at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and which, in all its ramifications, has had a more powerful influence than that of all other literature upon the intelligence of the great body of the people.

CHAPTER III.

Periodical Literature — Prices of Books; 18th Century — Two classes of Buyers — The Magazines — Collections of the Poets — The Circulating Library — Cheap Book-Clubs.

On the 8th of February, 1696, our friend John Dunton completed the nineteenth volume of 'The Athenian Mercury, resolving all the most nice and curious questions proposed by the ingenious.' This penny tract, published twice a-week, consisted of a single leaf. "The ingenious" ceased to question, and "The Athenian Society," as the bookseller called his scribes, ceased to answer, after six years of this oracular labour. There came an irruption of the barbarians, in the shape of "nine newspapers every week." John proposed to resume his task "as soon as the glut of news is a little over." The countryman waiting for the river to roll by was not more mistaken. In 1709 there was one daily paper in London; twelve, three times a week; and three, twice a week. Amongst those of three times a-week was 'The Tatler,' which commenced April 12, 1709. The early Tatlers had their regular foreign intelligence. They were as much newspapers as 'The Flying Post' and 'The Postboy.' But Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., very soon discontinued the information which he derived from letters from the Hague and advices from Berlin. He had something of a more

original character to offer his readers. The state of popular enlightenment at this period has been described by Johnson in his Life of Addison:—"That general knowledge which now circulates in common talk was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured." Steele and Addison had to form the taste of the new generation that they were addressing. They knew that there was a large class craving amusement, who might at the same time be refined and instructed without the pretensions of "the budge doctors of the stoic fur." They meddled little with politics. They left the furious discussions about Church and State to papers with an earnest political purpose, of which Charles Leslie, a violent Tory, thus spoke in his 'Rehearsals:'—"The greatest part of the people do not read books; most of them cannot read at all: but they will gather together about one that can read, and listen to an Observator or Review, as I have seen them, in the streets." The Tatler has been described as a great success; but we may measure that success by that of the more popular Spectator. In No. 555 of that work Steele says,—"The tax on each half-sheet has brought into the Stamp-Office, one week with another, above 20*l.* a-week, arising from the single paper, notwithstanding it at first reduced it to less than half the number that was usually printed before the tax was laid." The tax being a half-

penny, this would only show a daily circulation of 1600, and of about 3000 when it was unstamped. But the sale in volumes, according to the same statement, was as high as 9000 of each volume. This fact gives us a higher notion of the popularity of these charming papers, and of the consequent extent of general reading, than any other circumstance in the literary history of that period. But even the comparatively small daily sale was of importance, as showing that the great middle class was beginning to seek something better than could be found in the coarse and meagre news-sheets. The annals of 'The Gentlemen's Society at Spalding' record that in April, 1709, some residents there heard of the Tatlers, and ordered them to be sent to the coffee-house in the Abbey-yard:—"They were accordingly had, and read there every post-day, generally aloud to the company, who could sit and talk over the subject afterwards." The narrative goes on to say that "in March, 1711, the Spectator came out, which was received and read here as the Tatler had been." Such are the beginnings of popular knowledge. What the Tatler and Spectator were to the gentlemen of Spalding, the Penny Magazine and Chambers' Journal were to many a mechanic a hundred and twenty years after. One of this class has recorded the influence of such works, which addressed a far larger number than could be addressed at the beginning of the eighteenth century:—"The Penny Magazine was published. I borrowed the first volume, and de-

termined to make an effort to possess myself with the second. Accordingly, with January, 1833, I determined to discontinue the use of sugar in my tea, hoping that my family would not then feel the sacrifice necessary to buy the book. . . . I looked as anxiously for the issue of the monthly part as I did for the means of getting a living."* It is this spirit in the great mechanical class of this country that, in spite of some popular reading that is corrupting, and much that is frivolous, will ultimately raise and purify even the meanest sheet of our cheap literature, and compel those who have the responsibility of addressing large masses of the people to understand that an influential portion do feel that the acquirement of knowledge is worth some sacrifice.

The 'Complete Catalogue of Modern Books, published from the beginning of the century to 1756,' contains 5280 new works. In this Catalogue "all pamphlets and other tracts" are excluded. We can scarcely, therefore, compare this period, as to the number of books published, with that of 1680. The average number of the first 57 years of the 18th century was 93 new works each year. At the beginning of the century, the price of a folio or quarto volume ranged from 10*s.* to 12*s.*; an octavo from 5*s.* to 6*s.*; and a duodecimo from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 3*s.* We have the original 'Tatler' before us, with its curious advertisements of books, sales by the candle, cordial elixirs, lotteries, and

* 'Autobiography of an Artisan.' By Christopher Thomson. 1847.

bohea tea at 24*s.* a-pound. Whitelocke's 'Memorials,' folio, is advertised at 12*s.*; Rowe's edition of Shakspeare, 8vo., is 5*s.* per volume; 'The Peerage of England,' 8vo., 6*s.*; Shakspeare's Poems, 12mo., 1*s.* 6*d.*; 'The Monthly Amusement,' each number containing a complete novel, is 1*s.*; Sermons are 2*d.* each. We learn, from other sources, that the first edition of 'The Dunciad' was a sixpenny pamphlet; whilst 'The Governor of Cyprus, a Novel,' and 'The Wanton Fryar, a Novel,' were each 12*s.* The number printed of an edition was, no doubt, very moderate, except chiefly of books that were associated with some great popular excitement. Sacheverell's Trial is said to have sold 30,000; as, in a later period, 30,000 were sold of Burke's 'Reflections on the Revolution in France.' The old booksellers were cautious about works of imagination when they were expected to pay handsomely for copyright. The manuscript of 'Robinson Crusoe' was pronounced dangerous by the whole tribe of publishers, till one ventured upon an edition. The demand was such that the copies could only be supplied by dividing the work amongst several printers. One of Defoe's numerous assailants, in attempting to ridicule him, gives the best evidence of his popularity: "There is not an old woman that can go to the price of it but buys 'The Life and Adventures,' and leaves it as a legacy with the 'Pilgrim's Progress.'" Richardson's 'Pamela,' published in 1741, sold five editions in one year. There are fabulous accounts of Millar, the publisher, clearing

18,000*l.* by 'Tom Jones.' In those times the Dublin pirates were as assiduous in their plunder of English copyrights as the American publishers have been in plundering the English, and the English the American, in our days. Richardson was driven wild by the publication of half 'Sir Charles Grandison' in Ireland, in a cheap form, before a single volume was issued in England. There was a regular system of bribery in the English printing-offices, through which the Dublin booksellers organised their robberies. They sold their books surreptitiously in England and Scotland; and from their greater cheapness they had the command of their own market. This system lasted till the Union.

The prices of books do not appear to have much increased at the beginning of the reign of George III. In some cases their moderation is remarkable. We have seen how small was the demand for the first volume of Hume's 'History' in 1754. We have a number of 'The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser' at hand, May 9, 1764; and there we learn, from an advertisement, what a change ten years had produced. A new edition of the third and fourth volumes, in quarto, is advertised at 1*l.* 5*s.*; but "the proprietor, at the desire of many who wish to be possessed of this valuable and esteemed history, is induced to a monthly publication, which will not exceed eight volumes." These volumes were 5*s.* each. It is manifest that the bookseller had found a new class to address

when he issued the monthly volumes. Hume says, "Notwithstanding the variety of winds and seasons to which my writings had been exposed, they had still been making such advances that the copy-money given me by the booksellers much exceeded anything formerly known in England." He had complained of the neglect of the "considerable for rank or letters." His publisher saw that a history with such charms of style—so freed from tedious quotations from state-papers and statutes—so unlike the great folios of Carte and Rapin—was a book for a new race of readers. Coleridge humorously enough says—"Poets and philosophers, rendered diffident by their very number, addressed themselves to 'learned readers;' then, aimed to conciliate the graces of 'the candid reader;' till, the critic still rising as the author sank, the amateurs of literature collectively were erected into a municipality of judges, and addressed as 'the Town.' And now, finally, all men being supposed to read, and all readers able to judge, the multitudinous 'Public,' shaped into personal unity by the magic of abstraction, sits nominal despot on the throne of criticism."* There is a great truth beneath the sarcasm. The enduring patronage of the public was beginning when Andrew Millar was bold enough to publish Hume's History in monthly five-shilling volumes. But there are still many evidences that the commerce of books at that period, and subsequently, did not contemplate the

* 'Biographia Literaria,' vol. i. p. 60, ed. 1817.

existence of a large class of buyers, beyond those who were at ease in their fortunes. In that farrago of sense and absurdity, 'The Life of James Lackington, the present Bookseller, Finsbury-square, London, written by himself' (1791), there is a remarkable disclosure of the mode in which books were prevented being sold cheaply, after the original demand had been satisfied:—"When first invited to these trade-sales, I was very much surprised to learn that it was common for such as purchased remainders to destroy one-half or three-fourths of such books, and to charge the full publication price, or nearly that, for such as they kept on hand. And there was a kind of standing order amongst the trade that, in case any one was known to sell articles under the publication price, such a person was to be excluded from trade-sales—so blind were copyright holders to their own interest." In the same manner, it is within the memory of many living persons that there was an invariable high price for fish in London, because the wholesale dealers at Billingsgate always destroyed a portion of what came to market, if the supply were above the average. The dealers in fish had not recognised the existence of a class who would buy for their suppers what the rich had not taken for their dinners; and knew not that the stalls of Tottenham Court Road had as many customers ready for a low price as the shops of Charing Cross for a high price. The fishmongers had not discovered that the price charged to the evening

customers had no effect of lowering that of the morning. Nor had the booksellers discovered that there were essentially two, if not more, classes of customers for books—those who would have the dearest and the newest, and those who were content to wait till the gloss of novelty had passed off, and good works became accessible to them, either in cheaper reprints, or "remainders" reduced in price. But books and fish have one material difference. Good books are not impaired in value when they are cheapened. Their character, which has been established by the first demand, creates a second and a larger demand. Lackington destroyed no books that were worth saving, but sold them as he best could. We have no quarrel with his self-commendation when he says, "I could almost be vain enough to assert that I have thereby been highly instrumental in diffusing that general desire for reading now so prevalent among the inferior orders of society."

What Lackington thought "a general desire for reading" was, nevertheless, a very limited desire. "The inferior orders of society" who had the desire did not comprehend many of the mechanics, and none of the husbandry labourers. It may be doubted whether the Magazine Literature that the eighteenth century called forth ever went beyond the gentry and the superior traders. Kippis says of the magazines, "they have been the means of diffusing a general habit of reading through the nation." There appears to have been a sort of

tacit agreement amongst all who spoke of public enlightenment in the days of George III. to put out of view the great body of "the nation" who paid for their bread by their weekly wages. The magazines were certainly never addressed to this class. But for the general book-buyers of the time, Cave's project of 'The Gentleman's Magazine' was a great step in popular literature. The booksellers would not join him in what they held to be a risk. When he had succeeded, and sold 10,000, then they set up the rival 'London Magazine.' Cave threw all his energy into the magazine, and was rewarded. "He scarcely ever looked out of the window, but with a view to its improvement," said Johnson. 'The Gentleman's Magazine' commenced in 1731. Then came, year after year, magazines "as plenty as blackberries:"—'The London,' 'The Universal,' 'The Literary,' 'The Royal,' 'The Complete,' 'The Town and Country,' 'The Ladies',' 'The Westminster,' 'The European,' 'The Monthly.' The first popular review, 'The Monthly,' was published in 1749, and 'The Critical' in 1756. The public were now firmly established as the real patrons of letters. There was an end of poor authors knocking at great men's doors with a bundle of books. There was an end to paid Dedications and gratulatory Odes. Johnson could afford to launch his Dictionary without the help of the Earl of Chesterfield. Hume became "not only independent but opulent" through the "copy-money" of the booksellers.

The publication of Collections of the Poets was another proof of the extension of the reading public. The man who first projected such a Collection went for cheapness. In 1777 John Bell announced an edition of 'The Poets of Great Britain; complete from Chaucer to Churchill.' The London booksellers, to the number of forty, held a meeting, to resist what they considered an invasion of their literary property—some works within the time of the statute of Anne being legally theirs—others their copyright by courtesy. They resolved to combine their various interests; and they produced that edition of the Poets, in 68 volumes, which is called Johnson's, though, according to Malone, he never saw a line of the text. The 'Lives,' which Johnson wrote for two hundred guineas, will endure as a great classic work, however deformed by hasty or prejudiced judgment. Many of the Poets given in the series have no pretension to be looked upon again, except as a part of literary history, which may show how the most feeble may attain reputation in an age of mediocrity.' The booksellers spoke contemptuously of Bell's edition, which they called "trifling." They boasted their superior printing; but they gave no place in their Collection to Chaucer, Spenser, or Donne, as Bell had done. They did not care to direct the public taste;—they printed what they thought would sell. The demand for such Collections has always been one of the proofs of a healthy condition of public intelligence; but the

want has not often been supplied with any judgment beyond that of the rude commercial estimate of the prevailing fashion in poetry. It is extremely difficult to deal with such matters. All literary students have a proper horror of abridgments and analyses. They want all of an author, or none. You can neither make Chaucer extremely popular by an entire reprint, nor command a large sale by partial extract. But John Bell was right, in 1777, to risk the printing of three great early poets, whilst the booksellers began with Waller. Here were poets that can never be wholly obsolete. But the rubbish called poetry that found its way, by trade preferences, into Johnson's edition — the inanities of the drivellers between Pope and Gray —let not these be reproduced in our time, when such Collections are coming again into fashion, and showing, as they showed before, an extension of readers.

The Circulating Library—what a revolution was that in popular literature! How this new plant appeared above the earth, where it first budded, where it bore its early fruit—how it grew into a great tree, like that in the old title to Lilly's Grammar, where the apples of knowledge are being gathered by little climbing-boys—would be difficult to trace and to record. There it was—this great economiser of individual outlay for books—in most market-towns at the beginning of the century. The universal adoption of the name is the best proof of the common recognition of the idea. It

changed the habits of the old country booksellers. It found them other occupation than keeping a stall in the market-place, as did their worthy forefathers. They dealt no longer in tracts and single sermons. It sent the chap-books into the villages. It made the 'Seven Champions of Christendom' and 'The Wise Masters of Greece' vulgar. It created a new literature of fiction. It banished 'Robinson Crusoe' to the kitchen, and 'The Arabian Nights' to the nursery. It built up great printing-houses in Leadenhall-street; and held out high rewards for rapid composition, at the rate of five pounds per volume, to decayed governesses who had seen the world, and bank-clerks of an imaginative turn of mind. These could produce a wilderness of Italian bandits, with unlimited wealth and beauty, who had won the hearts of credulous countesses, and only surrendered to the hangman when whole armies came out to take them. These could unveil all the mysterious luxuries of great mansions in Grosvenor-square, or of sumptuous hotels in Bond-street. There was ever and anon a "bright particular star" in the Milky Way of popular fiction. But the circulating library went on its own course, whether the empyrean of romance were dim or brilliant. "What have you got new?" was the universal question put to the guardian of the treasures of this recently-discovered world of letters. When the bower-maid of the luxurious fair one, who lolled upon the sofa through a long summer's day, as Gray did when he was deep in Crébillon,

came to "change" the book, great sometimes was the perplexity. It was not a difficult task to "change," but the newness was puzzling. The lady and the neat-handed Phillis pursued their studies simultaneously. They did not like "poetry;" they did not like "letters." 'Sir Charles Grandison' was as old and as tiresome as 'Pamela.' 'Tom Jones,' and 'Peregrine Pickle;' they wondered why they were allowed to remain in the catalogue. They had read 'Cœlebs in search of a Wife'—the charming book—but they did not want it again. Perhaps, suggested the bookseller's apprentice, 'The Monk' might do once more. And so the circulating library went on, slow and struggling, till, about 1814, the unlucky desire for "something new" brought down to the little greasy collection, whose delusive numbers of volumes ranged from 1 to 3250, a new novel, with the somewhat unpromising title of 'Waverley, or 'tis Sixty Years since.' At first, the lady upon the sofa, and the counsellor of her studies, could not endure it, for it was full of horrid Scotch. It was often "at home," as the phrase went, for six months of its probation; when, somehow, it was discovered that a new book of wonderful talent had come out of the North. Another and another came, and in a few years the old circulating library was ruined. The Burneys, and Edgeworths, and Radcliffes, and Godwins, and Holcrofts, who had mixed with much lower company upon the librarian's shelves, still held a place. But the Winters in London

and Winters in Bath, the Midnight Bells, the Nuns, and the Watch-Towers, retired from business. There was then a new epoch in the circulating-library life. The literature of travels and memoirs timidly claimed a place by the side of the fashionable novel, which asserted its dignity by raising its price to a guinea and a half. The old legitimate stupidity, which did very well before the trade was disturbed, would no longer "circulate." But the names of the producers of the higher fiction were not "Legion." "Something new" must still be had. To meet the market, every variety of west-end authorship was experimented upon. The number to be printed could be calculated with tolerable exactness, according to the reputation of the writer,—and this calculation regulated the payment of copyright, from fifty pounds, and five hundred printed, to the man without a name, up to fifteen hundred pounds, and an impression of three thousand, to "the glass of fashion." But in this department of the commerce of literature,—as it will be in the end with every branch upon which the growth of popular intelligence is operating,—the rubbish is perishable, has perished; the good endureth.

The circulating library is now, in many instances, a real instrument of popular enlightenment. Yet in some of the smaller towns, and in watering-places where raffles have their charm, and a musical performance is patronised in the 'Fancy Repository,' by "audience fit though few"—there the

circulating library may be studied in its ancient brilliancy. There are still preserved, with a paper number on their brown leather backs, and a well-worn bill of the terms of subscription on their sides, those volumes, now fading into oblivion, whence the writers of many a penny journal of fiction are drawing and will still draw their inspiration. Many of these relics of a past age will live over again in shilling volumes with new titles. The heroes and heroines will change their names; the furniture of the apartments in which they utter their vows of love will be modernised; every sentence which in the slightest degree approaches the vulgar will be softened down or obliterated. There is a great deal yet to be done in this way; and the metamorphosis will go on and prosper. In the mean while the circulating libraries, both in London and the provinces, are supporting a higher literature of fiction than those of the past generation; and they find also that there are other volumes almost as attractive as the last new novel. They are doing the same work as the book-clubs. Both these modes of co-operation have had the effect of making the demand for a book that is at once solid and attractive more certain than the old demand by individual purchasers. The certainty of the demand necessarily produces a gradual reduction of price. An average demand is created, resulting from an average of taste in those who belong to book-societies and subscribe to circulating

libraries. But these channels for the sale of new books are not materially influenced by lowness of price. Cheapness is greatly influential with the private purchaser; but very many are content with the reading of a new book, through the club or the library, who would never buy it for their own household. This first demand is one of the means by which good books may be cheapened for a subsequent large issue for the permanent home library. In 'The Life of Lackington' there is the following passage:—"I have been informed that, when circulating libraries were first opened, the booksellers were much alarmed; and their rapid increase added to their fears, and led them to think that the sale of books would be much diminished by such libraries. But experience has proved that the sale of books, so far from being diminished by them, has been greatly promoted; as from these repositories many thousand families have been cheaply supplied with books, by which the taste of reading has become much more general, and thousands of books are purchased every year by such as have first borrowed them at those libraries, and, after reading, approving of them, have become purchasers."

One of the first attempts, and it was a successful one, to establish a cheap Book-Club was made by Robert Burns. He had founded a Society at Tarbolton, called the Bachelors' Club, which met monthly for the purposes of discussion and conversation. But this was a club without books; for

the fines levied upon the members were spent in conviviality. Having changed his residence to Mauchline, a similar club was established there, but with one important alteration :—the fines were set apart for the purchase of books, and the first work bought was 'The Mirror,' by Henry Mackenzie. Dr. Currie, the biographer of Burns, in recording this fact, says, "With deference to the Conversation Society of Mauchline, it may be doubted whether the books which they purchased were of a kind best adapted to promote the interest and happiness of persons in this situation of life." The objection of Dr. Currie was founded upon his belief that works which cultivated "delicacy of taste" were unfitted for those who pursued manual occupations. He qualifies his objection, however, by the remark, that "Every human being is a proper judge of his own happiness, and within the path of innocence ought to be permitted to pursue it. Since it is the taste of the Scottish peasantry to give a preference to works of taste and of fancy, it may be presumed they find a superior gratification in the perusal of such works." This truth, timidly put by Dr. Currie, ought to be the foundation of every attempt to provide books for all readers. We are learning to correct the false opinions which, for a century or two, have been degrading the national character by lowering the general taste. Those who maintained that taste was the exclusive property of the rich and the luxurious, could not take away from the humble

the beauty of the rose or the fragrance of the violet; they could not make the nightingale sing a vulgar note to "the swink'd hedger at his supper;" nor, speaking purely to a question of taste, did they venture to lower the noble translation of the Bible, which they put into the hands of the poor man, to something which, according to the insolent formula of those days, was "adapted to the meanest capacity." A great deal of this has passed away. It has been discovered that music is a fitting thing to be cultivated by the people; the doors of galleries are thrown open for the people to gaze upon Raffaelles and Correggios; even cottages are built so as to satisfy a feeling of proportion, and to make their inmates aspire to something like decoration. All this is progress in the right direction.

In the year 1825 Lord Brougham (then Mr. Brougham), in his 'Practical Observations upon the Education of the People,' explained a plan which has yet been only partially acted upon. "Book-Clubs or Reading Societies may be established by very small numbers of contributors, and require an inconsiderable fund. If the associates live near one another, arrangements may be easily made for circulating the books, so that they may be in use every moment that any one can spare from his work. Here, too, the rich have an opportunity presented to them of promoting instruction without constant interference: the gift of a few books, as a beginning, will generally prove a sufficient encouragement to carry on the plan by weekly

or monthly contributions: and, with the gift, a scheme may be communicated to assist the contributors in arranging the plan of their association." Simple in its working as such a plan would appear to be, the instances of these voluntary associations are really few. In Scotland, Lending Libraries and Itinerating Libraries have, in some districts, been established successfully; but in England, Lending Libraries are scarcely to be found, except in connexion with schools, or under the immediate direction of the minister of a parish or of a dissenting congregation. In these cases, we fear, comes too frequently into action the desire, laudable no doubt, to promote "the interest and happiness of persons in this situation of life." They are not permitted to choose for themselves. The best books of amusement are kept out of their sight; and they contrive to get hold of the worst. The timidity which insists upon supplying these libraries with *pattern* books renders the libraries disagreeable, and therefore useless.*

* See page 309.

CHAPTER IV.

Continued dearness of Books — Useful Knowledge Society — Modern Epoch of Cheapness — Demand and Supply — The Printing-machine — The Paper-machine — Revival of Wood-cutting.

FROM the time when Hume's 'History' was published at 5*s.* a volume, there appears to have been a steady advance in the price of books to the end of the century. In the eleven years from 1792 to 1802, there was an average publication of 372 new books per year. The number of new books had quadrupled upon the average of those published from 1701 to 1756. But the duodecimo had been increased in price from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 4*s.*; the octavo from 5*s.* or 6*s.* to 10*s.*; the quarto from 12*s.* to 1*l.* 1*s.* From 1800 to 1827 there were published, according to the London Catalogue, 19,860 books, including reprints; for which reprints deducting one-fifth, there were 15,888 new books, being an annual average of 588. Books were still rising in price. The duodecimo mounted up to 6*s.*, or became a small octavo at 10*s.* 6*d.*; the octavo was raised from 10*s.* to 12*s.* or 14*s.*; the quarto was very frequently two guineas. Some of this rise of price was unquestionably due to the general rise in the value of labour, and to the higher price of paper. But more is to be ascribed to the determination of the great publishers not sufficiently to open their eyes

to the extension of the number of readers, and the absolute certainty, therefore, that a system of extravagantly high prices was an unnatural, bigoted, and unprofitable system. They paid most liberally for copyright, and they looked only to an exclusive sale for their remuneration. They did not apply the same system to periodical works. The two great Reviews, the 'Edinburgh' and the 'Quarterly,' were as cheap, if not cheaper, having regard to their literary merit, than the cheapest books of the previous century. They were certain of their profit through that union of excellence and cheapness which could not fail to create a large demand. The publishers generally had not the same reliance upon the increase of readers of other popular works of original excellence. It has only been within the last twenty years that their unalloyed confidence in a narrow market has been first shaken, and then overthrown.

In looking back upon the changes of a quarter of a century, it is impossible, even for the writer, who was identified with this great movement in Popular Literature, to forbear speaking of what was accomplished by 'The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.' One who has written contemporary history in a broad and liberal spirit says—"The institution of this Society was an important feature of its times, and one of the honours belonging to the reign of George IV. It did not succeed in all its professed objects: it did not give to the operative classes of Great Britain a

library of the elements of all sciences—it omitted some of the most important of the sciences, and, with regard to some others, presented anything rather than the elements. It did not fully penetrate the masses that most needed aid. But it established the principle and precedent of cheap publication (cheapness including goodness), stimulated the demand for sound information, and the power and inclination to supply that demand; and marked a great æra in the history of popular enlightenment."* The Society originated with Mr. Brougham, in 1826. He gathered around him some of the leading statesmen, lawyers, and philanthropists of his day. Men eminent in letters and in science joined the association. And yet its success was so doubtful in the eyes of those who had been accustomed to consider high price as a necessary condition of excellence, that one of the greatest publishing houses refused to bring out the treatises without a guarantee. The Society wisely went upon the principle, originally, of leaving all the trade arrangements to its publishers. It placed its 'Library of Useful Knowledge,' its 'Farmer's Series,' its 'Maps,' in the hands of Messrs. Baldwin, paying the literary and artistical expenses, and receiving a rent upon the copies sold. Mr. Knight originated the 'British Almanac' and its 'Companion,' 'The Library of Entertaining Knowledge,' 'The Penny Magazine,' and 'The Penny Cyclopædia;' and he bore the entire expense and risk of

* Miss Martineau's 'History of the Peace,' vol. i. p. 580.

these works, as he did also for 'The Gallery of Portraits,' and 'The Journal of Education,' paying upon all a rent when the sale reached a certain number of copies.* It is sufficient to mention these facts to show that the operations connected with this Society were not upon an insignificant scale, or not fruitful of large results; and that they were essentially commercial operations. The cry that was raised against this Society, by those who were interested in the publication of dear books, was that of "monopoly." That cuckoo cry was repeated on every side. Fashionable publishers shouted it; the old conventional school of authors echoed it. Those who wrote for the Society were called, in derision, "compilers." Scribblers who never verified a quotation ridiculed patient industry as dulness.

From the time when the Society commenced a real "superintendence" of works for the people—when it assisted, by diligent revision and friendly inquiry, the services of its editors—the old vague generalities of popular knowledge were exploded; and the scissars-and-paste school of authorship had to seek for other occupations than Paternoster-row could once furnish. Accuracy was forced upon elementary books as the rule and not the exception. Books professedly "entertaining" were to be founded upon exact information, and their authorities invariably indicated. No doubt this superintendence in some degree interfered with the

* 'Address of the Committee,' June 1, 1843.

free course of original composition, and imparted somewhat of the utilitarian character to everything produced. But it was the only course by which a new aspect could be given to cheap literature, by showing that the great principles of excellence were common to all books, whether for the learned or the uninformed. In seventeen years the Society accomplished its main objects. There were considerable gains connected with it, and there were great losses. These are evanescent. The good which it did remains. It supplied the new demand for knowledge in a way that had never before been contemplated; it supplied it at the cheapest rate then possible; it broke down the distinctions between knowledge for the few and knowledge for the many; it created a popular taste for art; it sent its light into the strongholds of ignorance and superstition, by superseding, for a time, a large amount of weekly trash, and destroying, for ever, the astrological and indecent almanacs. But, beyond its own productions, it raised the standard of all popular literature. It has had worthy colabourers and successors. It ceased its work when others were in the field, honestly and successfully carrying forward what it had begun. He who writes this will ever think it an honour that he long worked in fellowship with Henry Brougham; and that he was a partaker, for some years, in the councils of an association of men more or less eminent, whose objects were never of a selfish, partial, or temporary nature. He has sate at those coun-

cils with five cabinet ministers, who felt most deeply that the education of the people, in its largest sense, was as much their business as the imposition of taxes. Where is that spirit now?

The modern epoch of cheap literature may be held to have commenced, however partially, in 1827, when Constable issued his 'Miscellany,' and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge their 'Library of Useful Knowledge.' In a few years followed 'The Library of Entertaining Knowledge,' Mr. Murray's 'Family Library,' and Lardner's 'Cabinet Cyclopædia.' These books were properly published under a tentative system. Not one of them rushed to that extreme cheapness which is indicated by quantity alone. They each had to feel their way to a demand proportioned to the expense of their production. That production was necessarily expensive. The cheapness consisted in the employment of the best writers to produce books of original merit at a price that was essentially low, by comparison with the ordinary rate at which books for the few were sold. Though Constable, in his grand style, talked of millions of buyers, he charged his little volumes 3*s.* 6*d.* each. He was right. The millions were not ready to buy such books at a shilling, nor even at sixpence. They are not ready now. 'The Library of Useful Knowledge' was charged at the rate of 3*d.* a sheet. Taking mere quantity of paper and printing into account, some of the penny journals of the present day are six times as cheap,

'The Library of Entertaining Knowledge' was 4*s.* 6*d.* a volume. The copyright of each volume ordinarily cost 200*l.*, and the woodcuts as much, and even more. 'The Family Library,' at 5*s.*, was, no doubt, equally costly. The same costliness applies to Lardner's 'Cyclopædia,' published at 6*s.* In these new undertakings, conceived in a totally different spirit from anything which had preceded them, there were large expenses which have been surprisingly reduced by scientific discovery and extended competition at the present day. There were about twenty woodcutters in London in 1827, who were real artists, paid at artists' prices. Woodcutting is now a manufacture. Paper, then, paid the high rate of duty, and was 50 per cent. dearer. Steam-printing was not universal, and was only applied to common works. Each of these series was offered to the very numerous body of those who, having become better educated than the same classes in a previous generation, were desirous of real improvement. They had a certain success, but a variable one. Every experiment of this sort has shown that such collections of separate and independent works cannot rely upon a sale as a series. They come to be bought, each work by itself, according to its attractions for individual purchasers. Thence all those irregularities of sale, and consequent accumulations of stock, which press heavily upon the profits of those volumes which are successful. The republication of the 'Waverley Novels' in 5*s.* volumes was

an exception to this rule. They constituted an integral work. Their sale was vast, although the total cost was 12*l.* Scott and his publisher saw the immense field that was before them, in giving their books to the world at a price that would carry them into thousands of households, instead of limiting them to the circulating libraries. They originally appeared in seventy-four volumes, at an aggregate cost of 34*l.* 10*s.* Had they remained in their original form, and at their first price, those heroic efforts which lifted a mountain of debt off the shoulders of that great man who, perhaps, more than all men, might have claimed the motto which Burke said should be his—"Nitor in adversum"—those labours which wore him out, would not have been successful. Neither would the success have come so soon had the later publication in twenty-five volumes for 5*l.* been tried in the first instance. If the 'Waverley Novels' go through new phases of cheapness, it will be because there is now a larger public to buy; and because the first natural price for all works of extraordinary merit, that of authorship, has been already paid largely and liberally. The question of price is then mainly reduced to a question of paper and print. But miserable would it be for a nation whose "chiefest glory is its authors," at a time when the nature of that glory is properly understood, if a passion for premature cheapness, to be measured by mere quantity, were to possess the minds of the people, and to be the expression of the "Vox populi,"

There was a much larger public always ready to purchase these enchanting fictions than have been, at any time during the last quarter of a century, ready for the purchase of books of information, however agreeably presented. We doubt whether the Family Libraries, and the Libraries of Entertaining Knowledge, and the Cabinet Cyclopædias, would have sold better at the time of their publication, if they had been produced at half the original price. The experiment was tried, when the number of readers was largely increased, in 'Knight's Weekly Volume' —a series published at one-third the price of Constable's 'Miscellany.' The majority of books in that series were, for the most part, of intrinsic merit; many also carrying the recommendation of popular names as their authors. "Why Mr. Knight did not profit largely by the speculation is a problem yet to be solved," says the writer of a recent paper on 'Literature for the People.' The solution is, that the people did not sufficiently buy them. So far from twenty thousand copies being sold of many volumes, as asserted, there were not twenty volumes, out of the hundred and forty, that reached a sale of ten thousand, and the average sale was scarcely five thousand. They were not cheap enough for the humble, who looked to mere quantity. They were too cheap for the genteel, who were *then* taught to think that a cheap book must necessarily be a bad book. It is impossible not to remember that, even ten years ago, the majority of publishers, and many of their supporters in the

public journals, hated cheap books. The 'Weekly Volumes' were welcomed very generally by those who were anxious for the enlightenment of the people. Societies were set on foot for their circulation. But all experience has shown that no associations for recommending books, and forcing their sale, can be successful. The people, of every grade, will choose for themselves. It is useless to urge an adult, whether male or female, to buy a solid book when an exciting one is longed for. It is worse than useless to give books of improvement away to the poor. They always suspect the motive. Very wisely did a witness before the "Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps," 1851, say, "There are classes which you cannot reach, unless you go to them with something which is the nearest thing to what they want." If they want fiction, they will not look at science or history. At the time of the issue of 'The Weekly Volume,' the sale of books at railway stations was unknown; and if it had been known, they scarcely presented sufficient attractions for the travelling readers for amusement. They were published also in too quick succession. It was a plausible theory of the editor, that, if good books, extremely cheap, were issued rapidly enough to form a little library, many such libraries would be formed. Those who have to deal with 'Literature for the People' must bear in mind that time as well as money has to be economised by those who of necessity must labour hard either by hand or head. What may be called furniture books may

be bought by the luxurious, to put upon their shelves, and looked at when wanted. The earnest workers buy few books that they are not desirous to read, and to read at once. They bought such a book in 1830, to the extent of 50,000 copies. 'The Results of Machinery,' written by the author of this volume, was addressed to great human interests. It was not professedly amusing; but it was the first attempt to take Political Economy out of its hard and logical track. It is now recorded, as a wonderful instance of the application of cheapness to a dry subject, that Mr. M'Culloch's 'Essay on the Rate of Wages,' is republished at a shilling. It is in no spirit of self-laudation that we presume to think that the vaunted cheapness of 1854 had some previous examples.

In this principle, that the great mass of the people will read as they buy, lies the secret of the enormous success of the weekly sheets of that great epoch of cheapness which began about twenty years ago. It is the principle which is the foundation of the extensive demand, growing year by year, for all periodical literature. It made the essayists. It made the magazines. It made the newspapers. It caused a sale of three hundred thousand weekly sheets in 1834. It is causing a sale of fourteen hundred thousand weekly sheets in 1854. Before we proceed in the examination of this remarkable epoch of popular literature, let us glance at the influence of mechanical and scientific improvement

on the cheapening of books during the last thirty or forty years.

Those who have followed us in our notices of the early history of printing will scarcely have failed to see how the ordinary laws of demand and supply have regulated the progress of this art, whose productions might, at first sight, appear to form an exception to other productions required by the necessities of mankind. There can be little doubt, we think, that when several ingenious men were, at the same moment, applying their skill to the discovery or perfection of a rapid mode of multiplying copies of books, there was a demand for books which could not well be supplied by the existing process of writing. That demand had doubtless been created by the anxiety to think for themselves which had sprung up amongst the laity of Catholic Europe. There was a very general desire amongst the wealthier classes to obtain a knowledge of the principles of their religion from the fountain-head,—the Bible. The desire could not be gratified except at an enormous cost. Printing was at last discovered; and Bibles were produced without limitation of number. The instant, therefore, that the demand for Bibles could be supplied, the supply acted upon the demand, by increasing it in every direction; and when it was found that not only Bibles but many other books of real value, such as copies of the ancient classics, could be produced with a facility equal to the wants of every purchaser, books at

once became a large branch of commerce, and the presses of the first printers never lacked employment. The purchasers of books, however, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were almost wholly confined to the class of nobles and those of the richer citizens and scholars by profession. It was a very long time before the influence of the press had produced any direct effect upon the habits of the great mass of the people. It was not till the system of periodical literature was fairly established, and that newspapers first, and magazines and reviews subsequently, had taken hold of the popular mind, that the productions of the press could be said to be in demand amongst the people generally. Up to our own times that demand has been limited to very narrow bounds; and the circumstances by which it has been extended are as remarkable as those which accompanied the progress of the original invention of printing. The same principle of demand going before supply, and the same reaction of supply upon demand, will be found to have marked the operations of the printing-press in this country, during the last twenty-five years, as distinctly as they marked them throughout Europe in the latter part of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth. We will shortly recapitulate these circumstances.

A few years after the commencement of the present century, a system of education, which is now known throughout Europe as that of *mutual*

instruction, was introduced into this country. In whatever mode this system was called into action, its first experiments soon demonstrated that, through it, education might be bestowed at a much cheaper rate than had ever before been considered practicable. This success encouraged the friends of education to exertions quite unexampled; and the British and Foreign School Society, and the National Society, had, in a very few years, taught some thousands of children to read and write, who, without the new arrangements which had been brought into practice, would in great part have remained completely untaught. A demand for books of a new class was thus preparing on every side. The demand would not be very sudden or very urgent; but it would still exist, and would become stronger and stronger till a supply was in some degree provided for it. It would act, too, indirectly but surely, upon that portion of society whose demand for knowledge had already been in part supplied. The principle of educating the humblest in the scale of society would necessarily give an impulse to the education of the class immediately above them. The impulse would indeed be least felt by the large establishments for education at the other end of the scale; and thus, whilst the children of the peasant and the tradesman would learn many valuable lessons through the influence of a desire for knowledge for its own sake, and of love for their instructors, many of the boys of our great

public schools would long remain acquiring only a knowledge of words and not of things, and influenced chiefly by a degrading fear of brutal punishment. The demand for knowledge thus created, and daily gathering strength amongst the bulk of the people, could not be adequately supplied forty years ago by the mechanical inventions then employed in the art of printing. Exactly in the same way as the demand for knowledge which began to agitate men's minds about the middle of the fifteenth century produced the invention of printing, so the great extension of the demand in England, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, produced those mechanical improvements which have created a new æra in the typographical art. These improvements consist in the process of stereotyping, and in the printing-machine, as distinguished from the printing-press.

As several approaches had been made before the time of Faust to the principle of printing books from moveable types, so the principle of producing impressions from a cylinder, and of inking the types by a roller, which are the great principles of the printing-machine, had been discovered in this country as early as the year 1790. In that year Mr. William Nicholson took out a patent for certain improvements in printing, the specification of which clearly shows that to him belongs the first suggestion of printing from cylinders. But this inventor, like many other ingenious men, was led astray by a part of his project, which was highly

difficult, if not impracticable, to the neglect of that portion of his plan which, since his time, has been brought into the most perfect operation. Nicholson's patent was never acted upon. The first maker of a printing-machine was Mr. Koenig, a native of Saxony; and the first sheet of paper printed by cylinders, and by steam, was the 'Times' newspaper of the 28th November, 1814. The machine thus for the first time brought into action was that of Mr. Koenig. It has been superseded by machines of improved construction.

Let us imagine a state of things in which the demand for works of large numbers should have gone on increasing, while the mechanical means of supplying that demand had remained stationary—had remained as they were at the beginning of the present century. Before the invention of stereotyping it was necessary to print off considerable impressions of the few books in general demand, such as bibles and prayer-books, that the cost of composition might be so far divided as to allow the book to be sold cheap: with several school-books, also, it was not uncommon to go to press with an edition of 10,000 copies. Two men, working eight hours a-day each, would produce 1000 perfect impressions (impressions on each side) of a sheet per day; and thus, if a book consisted of twenty sheets (the size of an ordinary school-book), one press would produce the twenty sheets in 200 days. If a printer, therefore, were engaged in the production of such a school-book, who could only devote one

press to the operation, it would require very nearly three-quarters of a year to complete 10,000 copies of that work. It is thus evident, that if the work were to be published on a given day, it must begin to be printed at least three-quarters of a year before it could be published; and that there must be a considerable outlay of capital in paper and in printing for a long time before any return could be expected. This advance of capital would have a necessary influence on the price of the book, in addition to the difference of the cost of working by hand as compared with working by machinery; and there probably the inconvenience of the tedious progress we have described would stop. But take a case which would allow no time for this long preparation. Take a daily newspaper, for instance, of which great part of the news must be collected, and written, and printed within twenty-four hours; calling into operation reporters at home, correspondents abroad, expresses, electric telegraphs. Formerly, the number printed of the most popular daily paper would be limited to five thousand; and this number could not be produced in time without the most perfect division of labour aiding the most intense exertion, provided that paper were printed by hand. The 'Times' newspaper now produces forty thousand copies in less than four hours, from one set of types.

If the difficulties that existed in producing any considerable number of newspapers before the invention of the printing-machine were almost insur-

mountable, equally striking will the advantages of that invention appear when we consider its application to the cheap weekly sheets, of which the 'Penny Magazine' was the type. Let us suppose that the education of the people had gone on uninterruptedly in the schools of mutual instruction, and that the mechanical means for supplying the demand for knowledge thus created had sustained no improvement. If the demand for knowledge had led to the establishment of the 'Penny Magazine' before the improvement of printing, it is probable that the sale of twenty thousand copies would have been considered the utmost that could have been calculated upon. One thousand perfect copies could only have been daily produced at one press by the labour of two men. The machine produces sixteen thousand copies. If the demand for a penny sheet, printed thus slowly by the press, had reached twenty thousand, it would have required two presses to produce that twenty thousand in the same time—namely, ten days—in which one hundred and sixty thousand are produced by the machine; and it would have required one press to be at work one hundred and sixty days, or sixteen presses for ten days, to effect the same results as the machine effects in ten days. But, in point of fact, such a sale could never have been reached under the old system of press-work. The hand-labour, as compared with the machine, would have added at least forty per cent. to the cost of production, even if the sixteen presses could have been set in motion.

Without stereotyping for duplicates, no attempt would have been made to set them in motion; for the cost of re-engraving woodcuts, and of re-composing the types, would have put a natural commercial limit to the operation.

The invention of the paper-machine was concurrent with the invention of the printing-machine. Without the paper-machine, the material of books, and newspapers, and journals, could never have been supplied with any reference to cheapness. Chemistry, too, has converted the coarsest rags, and the dirtiest cotton-wool, into fine pulp. The material of which this book is formed existed a few month ago, perhaps, in the shape of a tattered frock, whose shreds, exposed for years to the sun and wind, covered the sturdy loins of the shepherd watching his sheep on the plains of Hungary;—or it might have formed part of the coarse blue shirt of the Italian sailor, on board some little trading-vessel of the Mediterranean;—or it might have pertained to the once tidy *camicia* of the neat straw-plaiter of Tuscany, who, on the eve of some festival, when her head was intent upon gay things, condemned the garment to the *stracci-vendolo* (rag-merchant) of Leghorn;—or it might have constituted the coarse covering of the flock-bed of the farmer of Saxony, or once looked bright in the damask table-cloth of the burgher of Hamburgh;—or, lastly, it might have been swept, new and unworn, out of the vast collection of the shreds and patches, the fustian and buckram, of a London

tailor; or might have accompanied every revolution of a fashionable coat in the shape of lining—having travelled from St. James's to St. Giles's, from Bond Street to Monmouth Street, from Rag Fair to the Dublin Liberty, till man disowned the vesture, and the kennel-sweeper claimed its miserable remains. In each or all of these forms, and in hundreds more which it would be useless to describe, this sheet of paper a short time since might have existed. No matter, now, what the colour of the rag—how oily the cotton—what filth it has gathered and harboured through all its transmutation—the scientific paper-maker can produce out of these filthy materials one of the most beautiful productions of manufacture. But he has a difficulty in obtaining even these coarse materials. The advance of a people in civilisation has not only a tendency to make the supply of rags abundant, but, at the same time, to increase the demand for rags. The use of machinery in manufactures renders clothing cheap; the cheapness of clothing causes its consumption to increase, not only in the proportion of an increasing population, but by the scale of individual expenditure; the stock of rags is therefore increasing in the same ratio that our looms produce more linen and cotton cloth. But then the increase of knowledge runs in a parallel line with this increase of comforts; and the increase of knowledge requires an increase of books. The principle of publishing books and tracts, to be read by thousands instead of tens and

hundreds, has already caused a large addition to the demand for printing-paper. Science made paper cheap in spite of taxation. The government has worked against science to keep books dear.

We cannot pass over the mechanical and other scientific improvements in typography, which preceded and accompanied the great epoch of cheapness of the last quarter of a century, without more particularly noticing the revival, for so it may be called, of the art of woodcutting. In the 'Penny Magazine' of 1836, the editor says that no expense or labour has been spared to attain every improvement of which the art of woodcutting is susceptible—that the engravings of 305 numbers have cost 12,000*l.* (about 40*l.* a number)—that many difficulties have been overcome in adapting the character of the engravings to the rapid movements of the printing-machine—and that the art, in connexion with the cheapest form of printing, has been carried further than at one time was thought to be possible. This was written in 1836. Let any one look at a common book with woodcuts, printed thirty years ago, and he will understand what difficulties had to be overcome before 'The Penny Magazine' could present successful copies of works of art. This 'Penny Magazine,' which some even now affect to sneer at, produced a revolution in popular art throughout the world. It created similar works, to which it supplied stereotype casts, in Germany, France, Holland, Livonia (in Russian and German), Bohemia (in Sclavonic), Italy, Ionian

Islands (in Modern Greek), Sweden, Norway, Spanish America, the Brazils, the United States. It raised up imitators on every side, and directed the union of art and letters into new channels. It was the forerunner of 'Punch,' and of 'The Illustrated London News.' A great art-critic of 1836 proclaimed, with oracular solemnity, "As there is no royal road to mathematics, so we say, once for all, there is no Penny Magazine road to the Fine Arts—the cultivation of the Fine Arts must be carried on by a comparatively small and gifted few, under the patronage of men of wealth and leisure." Many eminent designers—amongst whom are the honoured names of Harvey, Cruikshank, Doyle, Leech, Tenniel, Anelay, Gilbert—have gone the "Penny Magazine road," and found it quite as sure a highway to distinction, and far more pleasant, than the old by-way of patronage, so weary to the gifted few. It is wonderful how long and how tenaciously, both in literature and art, men clung to that idol Patronage. They are gone—the Chesterfields who kept Johnson seven years waiting in outward rooms,—and the Mansfields who grudged Wilkie thirty guineas for 'The Village Politicians:'—

> "Peor and Baälim
> Forsake their temples dim."

CHAPTER V.

London Catalogue, 1816–1851 — Annual Catalogues, 1828–1853 — Classes of Books, 1816–1851 — Periodicals, 1831, 1853 — Aggregate amount of Book-trade — Collections and Libraries — International Copyright — Readers in the United States — Irish National School-books.

'THE London Catalogue of Books published in Great Britain, 1816 to 1851,' furnishes, in its alphabetical list, with "sizes, prices, and publishers' names," that insight into the character and extent of the literature of a generation which we cannot derive from any other source. We have already given some of the calculations of past periods. Let us endeavour to trace what the commerce of books has been in our own time.

Every book in this 'London Catalogue' occupies a single line. There are 72 lines in a page; there are 626 pages. It follows that the Catalogue contains the titles of 45,072 books. In these 36 years, then, there was an average annual publication of 1252 books. This number is more than double the average of the period from 1800 to 1827. There is also published, by the proprietor of 'the London Catalogue,' an Annual Catalogue of New Books. From two of these catalogues we derive the following comparative results for the beginning and the end of a quarter of a century:—

1828.	New publications	842
1853.	,, ...	2530
1828.	Total number of volumes	1105
1853.	,, ,, ...	2934

1828.	Total cost of one set of the new publications	£668	10	0
1853.	,, ,, ,,	1058	17	9
1828.	Average price of each new work . .	0	16	0
1853.	,, ,, . .	0	8	4½
1828.	Average price per volume of the new publications	0	12	1
1853.	,, ,, ,,	0	7	2½

Such calculations are not arrived at without the labour of many hours; but the labour is not ill-bestowed by us, for they afford better data for opinion than loose talk about the number, quality, and price of books. Hence we learn, that, in 1853, there were three times as many books published as in 1828; that the comparative increase in the number of volumes was not so great, showing that of the new books more single volumes were published; that the total cost of one set of the new publications had increased by more than one-half of the former cost; that the average price of each new work had been reduced nearly one-half; and that the average price per volume had fallen about 5*s*. below the price of 1828. A further analysis of this Annual List shows that, of the 2530 books published in 1853, only 287 were published at a guinea and upwards; and that of these only 206 were books of general information; while 28 were law-books, and 53 of the well-accustomed dear class of guinea-and-a-half novels. Decidedly the Quarto Dynasty had died out.

As a supplement to the 'London Catalogue,

1816-1851,' there is published a 'Classified Index.' Through this we are enabled to estimate in round numbers the sort of books which the people were buying, or reading, or neglecting, in these 36 years.* We find that they were invited to purchase in the following proportion of classes:—

Works on divinity			10,300
History and geography			4,900
Fiction			3,500
Foreign languages and school-books			4,000
Drama and poetry			3,400
Juvenile books			2,900
Medical			2,500
Biography			1,850
Law			1,850
Science.—Zoology	550		
,, Botany	700		
,, Chemistry	170		
,, Geology	280		
,, Mathematics	350		
,, Astronomy	150		
,, Natural philosophy	300		
			2,450
Arts, &c.—Antiquities	350		
,, Architecture	500		
,, Fine arts	450		
,, Games and sports	300		
,, Illustrated works	500		
,, Music	220		
,, Genealogy and heraldry	140		
			2,460
Industry.—Mechanics, &c.	500		
,, Agriculture	250		
,, Trade and commerce	600		
,, Political economy, statistics	700		
,, Military	300		
			2,350
Carried forward			42,460

* The 'Classified Index' contains only about 40,000 references; while the number of books in the 'Catalogue' is 45,000. The book referred to in the Index is only once mentioned, in whatever form it has appeared. To equalize the number, we have added 10 per cent. to each division of the Index, in our calculation.

	Brought forward . .		42,460
Moral Sciences.—	Philology, &c.	350	
,,	Education	300	
,,	Moral philosophy . . .	300	
,,	Morals	450	
,,	Domestic economy	200	
			1,400
Miscellaneous (so classed)			1,400
			45,260

But the Catalogues of New Books fall very short of affording a complete view of the state of popular literature at any given period. We must apply to other sources of information.

The publication of 'The Penny Magazine,' and of 'Chambers' Journal,' in 1832, was concurrent with a general increase in the demand for periodical works. At the end of 1831 there were issued 177 monthly publications, a single copy of which cost 17*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* At the end of 1833 there were 236 monthly periodicals, a single copy of which cost 23*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.* At the end of 1853 there were 362 of the same monthly class, a single copy of which cost 14*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* In 1831 the average price of the monthly periodicals was 2*s.*; in 1833, 1*s.* 11½*d.*; and in 1853, 9½*d.* Can there be any doubt of the adaptation of periodical literature, during these years, to the wondrous extension of readers?

It appears from 'The London Catalogue of Periodicals,' published by Messrs. Longman and Co., from which we derive the calculations we have now made, that there are 56 *weekly* periodicals. There were 21 in 1833. But this list, which is adapted for what is known as 'The Trade,' is far

from including all the cheap sheets that are issued weekly from the London press. There is a very large class of such publications that are very rarely found in the shops of regular booksellers, either in town or country. Many of these periodicals have the taint upon them of the names of their publishers; and some of them a few years ago were infamous. We do not find in the 'London Catalogue of Periodicals' the names of several works, and of one especially, which present the most remarkable example in our times of the extent to which cheap literature is offered to the people in marts which are comparatively unknown to the upper and middle classes. The facilities of communication have sent an unparalleled quantity of weekly sheets through the land, at a rate of cheapness which defies all competition of literary quality against weight of paper and crowding of print. In every shop of every back-street of London and the larger towns, where a tradesman in tobacco or lollipops or lucifer-matches formerly grew thin upon his small amount of daily halfpence, there now rush in the schoolboy, the apprentice, the milliner, the factory-girl, the clerk, and the small shopkeeper, for their 'London Journal,' 'Family Herald,' 'Reynolds' Miscellany,' and 'Cassell's Paper.' We have ascertained, from sources upon which we can rely, that of these four sheets a million copies are sold weekly. Of the contents of these, and other cheap works, we shall have presently to speak.

When we look back at the various periods of

English publication, and consider how amazingly the aggregate number of books published in any one period has increased, we must also regard the size and price of the works published to form any adequate notion of the progress of cheap literature. With a general reduction of price during the last twenty years—with the substitution of duodecimos for quartos—and with single volumes beyond all former precedent—there is little doubt that the annual returns of the publishing trade, in all its departments (we include newspapers), are double what they were in 1833. They were estimated then at 2,500,000*l.* We should not be wide of the mark in considering them at present to have reached to 5,000,000*l.* As the silk-trade is now to be estimated, not by the number of ladies of fashion who wear brocade on court-days, but of the millions who buy a silk dress for ordinary use; so is the book-trade to be estimated, not by the number of the learned who once bought folios, and of the rich who rejoiced in exclusive quartos, but of the many to whom a small volume of a living author has become a necessity for instruction or for amusement, and who desire to read our established literature in editions well printed and carefully edited, though essentially cheap. This number of readers is constantly increasing, and as constantly pressing for a reduction of price upon modern books of high reputation. Mr. Macaulay's 'Essays' were originally published at 1*l.* 16*s.*; they then appeared in one large volume at 1*l.* 1*s.* Messrs. Longman now

advertise a "People's Edition," in 7 monthly parts at 1s., and in numbers at 1½*d.* They do so, they say, "on the recommendation of correspondents who have expressed their desire to possess them, but who have found the existing editions beyond their means."

In turning over the leaves of the London Catalogue from 1816 to 1851, we rejoice to see how much has been done in this direction, whatever may be the greater amount yet to be done. Of the Poets—Byron, Campbell, Crabbe, Coleridge, Moore, Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, are obtainable at the most reasonable prices, in collected editions. The elder Poets may be had in the Aldine Series, and in new collections, now in course of publication. The most popular of the recent Novelists—Scott, Dickens, D'Israeli, Lytton, Thackeray — are in volumes whose cheapness introduces them to many a fireside where the original editions would find no place. Wilkinson's 'Egypt,' Alison's 'History of Europe,' the works of Chalmers, and many extensive theological books, have been reproduced at cheap rates. The various 'Libraries' which have been published and are still publishing —Bohn's Antiquarian, Classics, Classical, Ecclesiastical, Illustrated, Scientific, and Standard; the Library of Entertaining Knowledge; the Family Library; the Edinburgh Cabinet Library; Lardner's Cyclopædia; Family Classical Library; Knight's Weekly Volumes; Jardine's Naturalist's Library; Murray's Home and Colonial Library; Sacred

Classics; Christian Family Library; Smith's Standard Library; Tegg's Standard Library; National Illustrated Library; Reading for the Rail; Traveller's Library; Standard Novels; Chambers' Miscellany of Facts, Papers for the People, Instructive Library; Weale's Rudimentary Series: these, the more important of the various Collections that can be called cheap, comprise no fewer than 1400 volumes. It would require an enumeration which is the province of the future bibliographer, to show how many separate books, in every department of knowledge, have been issued during the last twenty years, with a distinct reference to the means of the greatest number of readers. But the process here, as in other cases, has necessarily been gradual. The general cheapening of books must be gradual to be safe. The soundings of the perilous sea of publishing must be constantly taken. There is no chart for this navigation which exhibits all the sunken rocks and quicksands.

In addition to the Collections just enumerated, we have the new Libraries, whether known as Cheap Series, Parlour Library, Pocket Library, Railway Library, or Readable Books. These are, for the most part, devoted to novels, old and new, and to American reprints. In this form 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' rushed into a circulation which no book—with the exception of the Bible and Prayer-Book, and perhaps some Spelling-Book—ever before attained. Here Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton is

to reach a popularity which no novelist ever before reached; and to be paid "the extravagant sum of 20,000*l.* for the exclusive sale of his works for the next ten years," as we are assured in 'The Times.' We hear of enormous profits made, and fortunes realised, by these books. They meet the eye on every railway stall and in every stationer's window, glittering in green and crimson. But we also sometimes hear of large stocks of unsaleable ventures, and of consequent evil-fortune, in spite of one or two profitable undertakings. We have great confidence in the largest sale of the cheapest edition of an attractive book by an author of reputation; but we have no confidence in the large individual sale of a great number of such distinct books, each jostling the other in the race for popularity. We believe that the sale of many such works has been much exaggerated. We hear that the margin of profit, as commercial men say, is very narrow, and leaves little surplus to cover risk. Of one thing we are clear. Whatever sum may be paid for a great name, the natural sale of books of this class can afford very little for the payment of copyright in ordinary cases. The paper, machine-work, and binding, we are informed, of one of the shilling volumes will cost, for an impression of 10,000, about 220*l.*, and the trade expenses and advertising will raise that cost to 250*l.* This is 6*d.* per copy. They are sold wholesale at 8*s.* for 13 copies, which leaves a surplus of about 60*l.* But the setting up the types and the stereotyping will

cost about 40*l.* There is 20*l.* then left for the publisher upon 10,000*l.* If he sells 20,000*l.* there is 80*l.* Where is the fund for the payment of authorship? Is it to be assumed that a sale of 40,000 or 50,000 copies may at present be attained for such works under ordinary conditions? If not, is the cheapest supply of reading for these kingdoms to be kept up by piracies from America or republications of expired copyrights? We doubt if this trade generally is in a healthy position: at any rate, we fear that we must scarcely look to this class of books for making "Cheap Literature" what it might be made by judicious management—an instrument of great public good. Piracy from American authors has been, within these few years, chiefly confined to the shilling Railway Volumes; and it had a great success while all the elements that combine to produce an anti-slavery enthusiasm were in operation. But it has lost the charm of novelty, and the fashion of American novels is now somewhat stale. In the mean while the United States never relax in their course. In Mr. Carey's 'Letters on International Copyright,' published at Philadelphia in 1853, we have some details of the advantage of the fraudulent cheapness to the American public. He says, Mr. Dickens sells 'Bleak House' in England for 21*s.* (5 dollars); comparing the book with copyright books in America, of which the sale is large, he would expect 3 dollars under the international system. The number of 'Bleak House' supplied to American readers in

newspapers and magazines, as well as in the book form, is not less than 250,000, at half a dollar, giving for the whole 125,000 dollars. Mr. Dickens would charge 750,000 dollars:—

	Dollars.
Difference to the American public upon 'Bleak House' .	625,000.

Reckoning in the same way, the following differences are estimated:—

			Dollars.
Upon Sir E. Bulwer Lytton's last work,	166,000	copies .	350,000
Upon Mr. Macaulay's History .	125,000	,, .	400,000
Upon Sir A. Alison's History .	25,000	,, .	500,000
Upon Jane Eyre	80,000	,, .	75,000
Total difference on five books .			1,950,000

This is a difference of 409,500*l.* sterling. Mr. Carey deduces from these figures this logical consequence: "Under the system of international copyright, one of two things must be done: either the people *must* be taxed in the whole of this amount for the benefit of the various persons, abroad and at home, who are now to be invested with the monopoly power, or they *must* largely diminish their purchases of literary food." He would not have a healthy cheapness, produced in both countries by an open commerce and a fair competition. He would not have a cheapness produced by the publishers of both countries reckoning upon an extended market, and a consequent division of the first expenses of a book. He would have a piratical cheapness—the cheapness of the smuggler and the illicit distiller—"for the general interests

of the American people." This ingenious gentleman has a ready defence. There is no copyright in the facts of a book. Copyright is given for the clothing in which the body is produced to the world. Mr. Macaulay has contributed nothing to positive knowledge. Mr. Dickens has gone into a large garden, and made a bouquet of the flowers, although he paid no wages to the man who raised them. He who makes a book uses the common property of mankind, and all he furnishes is the workmanship. Mankind has, therefore, a right to say to the authors, whenever they seek an extension of their privileges, "Be content, my friends; do not risk the loss of a part of what you have, in the effort to obtain more." Mr. Carey is further obliging enough to tell us that in England authors, with a few brilliant exceptions, are condemned to almost hopeless poverty, which he attributes to our system of centralization. Why do not the wealthy people of England give a shilling a head towards paying for the copyright of books, instead of bringing the poverty of authors before the world, and demanding from other countries an extension of the monopoly they have at home? The people of England, through centralization, have become so poor and wretched that there is no demand for books, and no power to compensate the people who make them. Authors there are badly paid and insolently treated. Science is in no request in England, and hence the diminution of supply. In contrast with the limited sale of English books at home is the great extent of

sale here. *Argal*, let the authors starve at home; why should we, the great American people, tax ourselves for their aid? We give them *fame*, and that is enough. Let not *our* writers, adds this candid and modest gentleman, desire to barter our great market for literature for one in which Hood was permitted to starve, and Tennyson and others submit to the degradation of receiving public charity in the shape of pensions. The wretched English authors may come and live amongst us, and participate in our advantages. American authorship is Belgrave Square; let it not make a treaty with the Grub Street of England, to have a dinner from our well-furnished tables. We think Mr. Carey, "Author of Principles of Political Economy," has done service by this astounding effrontery. If he reflected the mind of the Government or the people, we should be hopeless of any attempt to unite England and America in the protection of a common literature founded upon a common language. But Mr. Carey does not reflect this mind. He does not even speak for the great body of American authors or publishers. He speaks for the proprietors of the newspapers, which, all over the Union, are filled, week by week, by the piracy of modern English Literature, and especially of English fiction. To keep up this robbery, writers and orators will alike prostitute themselves to defend, unblushingly, what they know to be a disgrace.

But in one point Mr. Carey is right. He shows

us, upon representations which we cannot doubt, that the works of popular authors, citizens of the United States, and so protected as copyright, are sold in much larger numbers than similar works in our own country, however cheap. How is this? The American people are much more universally readers than the English people. They are better educated. They have a Government that considers it a duty to educate the young without distinction, and to afford the adult every means of intellectual improvement. The American Government has created a reading nation. Our Government has created a people that rush to low casinos in the towns, and to sottish beer-shops in the country. The American Government accords all honour to them who have laboured in the enlightenment of the masses. Our Government wholly passes over every such claim to recognition. It is of little consequence, in the end, what Cabinets or Parliaments do for the advance of education, or the encouragement of men of letters. But it is somewhat unwise, to say the least of it, to provoke, by neglect and by injury, comparison with a nation that cultivates the same language under different institutions, and that can proclaim, in its energetic youth, that it has raised up an intelligent people out of the great mental inheritance to which our rulers have been faithless.

By injury? it will be said. The British Government may ignore letters, undervalue writers, barter away its patronage upon ignorance and incapacity

—but assuredly it cannot attempt to inflict direct injury upon literature and learning? And yet it does all this. The sale of school-books in the United States has reached an almost fabulous extent. Families have been raised to affluence by the enormous circulation of a Spelling-book or a Dictionary. A successful Grammar is a fortune. He who can produce sensible and amusing Reading-Lessons is better paid than a Secretary of State. Does the Government bestow any gratuities upon such services? Certainly not. But it does not discourage and annihilate them. It does not, as our Government does, interfere with competition by attempting to regulate prices. It does not do the silly thing which M. Louis Blanc wished to do in France for "the organization of literary labour." It has established no manufactory of school-books, produced cheaply, by the tax-payers helping the production. It has no Board of Commissioners, as we have, "to supply the National Schools in Ireland, *and the public generally*, with works in harmony with an improved system of education, cheap in price and superior in execution."* We ask, what possible right has the State to produce such books, and

* These are the words of an official puff, in 16 pages, called 'An Analysis of the Irish National School-books.' A more impudent document was never put forth by the Curlls of a past or present age. The manufacturers of the Irish Reading Lessons pirated a copyright belonging to the writer of this volume (occupying 47 pages, in 10 of their Lessons), 'The Mineral Kingdom,' which was written by Mr. Leonard Horner. Their 'Analysis' says, that these "most interesting facts and reasonings relating to Organised Remains are extracted from the writings of Buckland and other celebrated Geologists."

sell them in the open literary markets of this country, to the injury of all who produce similar books by the fair workings of capital and labour? School-books were formerly too dear; but as schools multiplied, cheaper books than the old standard works came into the market, and many took root and flourished. Much of this property has been destroyed by the Government operation; which is not confined to 'Reading Lessons,' but embraces 'Biographical Sketches of Poets'—'Selections from the Poets'—'Epitome of Geographical Knowledge'—'Grammar,' 'Arithmetic,' 'Geometry,' 'Mensuration,' 'Agriculture,' 'Maps.' The compilers of these books and maps are salaried state-servants; the books are printed at the lowest contract; the usual trade allowances are withheld; profit does not enter into price. A book of 17½ sheets demy, or 420 pages, bound in cloth, is sold for *sevenpence*, as we learn from the Commissioners' Catalogue. This is exactly the cost price for the paper, machine-work, and binding, in the very cheapest market. There is nothing for trade-management, and not one fraction for copyright. Commercial competition is impossible. We say, this is a fraudulent cheapness. All cheapness in books is fraudulent which sets aside a payment for literary labour. This is the cheapness of piracies, whether here or in the United States. It is a cheapness that, if carried out, as it might be by a Government, would degrade literature to the lowest condition, annihilating all invention and improvement. Once con-

cede the principle that the State has a right to produce educational books, except for the supply of schools paid by the State—and even then the policy is very doubtful—and there is no individual literary enterprise that may not be paralyzed and destroyed by this new agency. In England, the only commercial undertaking of the State is that of the Post Office. It is conducted with a profit; it is conducted with a precision and cheapness which really leave few things to be amended. There are especial reasons why the conveyance of letters through the whole civilized world should be the work of the State. No company, no individual, could grapple with such a gigantic task. But is there any other branch of commercial enterprise which the State could undertake with the slightest benefit—without most serious injury? If the end sought is to employ labour to a profit, individual enterprise will accomplish that end far better than the State. If the object is to employ labour that shall be unprofitable, who is to supply the deficiency in the funds that have called into activity the profitable labour? There would indeed be the equality of employments, but it would be the equality of universal poverty. The skilled and the unskilled would be reduced to the same level. There would be no prizes in the social wheel;—the blanks would be something worse than the mere absence of superfluities.

CHAPTER VI.

Cheap Fiction — Penny Periodicals.

THE Railway Libraries—by which generic term we mean single volumes, printed in small type on indifferent paper, and sold mostly at a shilling — are almost wholly devoted to novels, English or American. Whatever be the quality of the fiction so published, we may ask, without any general depreciation of such works, if the popularity of this class of reading has not a tendency to indispose for other reading, however attractive be the mode in which information, historical, critical, or scientific, be presented; and is it not a necessary consequence that books of another character than novels should be compelled to address themselves to a smaller class of readers, and must, therefore, of necessity be dearer? If this be true of the railway books, it is equally true of the weekly sheets. The demand for fiction amongst the largest class of readers has forced upon every weekly periodical the necessity for introducing fiction in some form or other. The writers of eminence cannot put forth their powers in this direction without charging a higher price for their numbers than those in which inferior writers are employed at low salaries. The higher price necessarily induces a smaller sale. The dealers in cheap

periodicals say, "you have no chance for a sale unless you give *as much paper* as the others give for a penny!" In this respect, some of the more extensively circulated of these sheets would appear to defy all reasonable competition. They are sold for 50*s.* per thousand; their paper and machine-work cost, at the very least, 45*s.* Out of this 5*s.* per thousand they have to pay their publishing expenses, their writers, their woodcuts, their composition, their stereotype casts. It is a neck-and-neck race for a very doubtful "plate;" and what may appear a slight addition to the weight of the "riders," in the shape of another halfpenny a pound upon their paper, would "distance" the greater number of them. When the popular estimate of a publication is that of the square inches which it contains of print, it requires no critical judgment to be assured that the amount of genius or knowledge engaged in its production is not very great. Hence, for the most part, a deluge of stories, that, to mention the least evil of them, abound with false representations of manners, drivelling sentimentalities, and impossible incidents. And yet they are devoured with an earnestness that is almost incomprehensible. The moralist may say—

> "England, the time is come when thou shouldst wean
> Thy heart from this emasculating food."

How is the weaning to be set about for this babyhood of the popular intellect?

The insuperable obstacle to a successful competition with the existing class of penny periodicals

is their pre-eminence in *external* cheapness. They were all founded upon the principle of attraction by low price alone. They employed the meanest "slaves of the lamp" in their production. Sheets came out double the size of any other penny sheet, badly printed on the thinnest paper, but nevertheless they were the largest sheets; their roots were thus planted in the popular earth. Some who bought them turned away from their filth and their folly; others welcomed these qualities. Gradually the sense of the better class of artisans operated, whilst they continued their offences, to reduce their number of customers. They changed their style; they became decent, but they remained stupid. The weeds were kept down, though not rooted out, in that garden: a few gaudy flowers were planted; fruit there was little. They have maintained their hold, by their external cheapness, against any attempt to produce a higher literature, with better paper and print. They have beaten almost every competitor who has sought to address *the same class* of buyers with something higher, intrinsically as cheap, but not so cheap to the eye. The unequal war is still being waged.

In June, 1846, the last number of 'The Penny Magazine' was published. Mr. Knight, who had been its editor from the commencement, in 1832, thus writes in his concluding 'Address to the Reader,' after stating that there then were published 14 three-halfpenny and penny miscellanies, and 37 weekly sheets, forming separate books:

—"It is from this competition that the 'Penny Magazine' now withdraws itself. Its editor most earnestly wishes success to those who are keeping on their course with honesty and ability . . . . He rejoices that there are many in the field, and some who have come at the eleventh hour, who deserve the wages of zealous and faithful labourers. But there are others who are carrying out the principle of cheap weekly sheets to the disgrace of the system, and who appear to have got some considerable hold upon the less informed of the working people, and especially upon the young. There are manufactories in London whence hundreds of reams of vile paper and printing issue weekly; where large bodies of children are employed to arrange types, at the wages of shirt-makers, from copy furnished by the most ignorant, at the wages of scavengers. In truth, such writers, if they deserve the name of writers, *are* scavengers. All the garbage that belongs to the history of crime and misery is raked together, to diffuse a moral miasma through the land, in the shape of the most vulgar and brutal fiction." This is a curious and instructive record. 'The Penny Magazine,' popular as it once was, to the extent of a sale of 200,000, could not contend with a cheapness that was wholly regardless of quality; and it could not hold its place amidst this dangerous excitement. The editor had his hands fettered by the necessity of keeping up the purely instructive character of that journal. Without a large supply of fiction

it necessarily ceased to be popular. A French writer, who laments over the "immondices" of the literature of Paris in 1840, calls for romances "appropriés par une imagination souple et brillante au goût des classes laborieuses;" and he suggests the principle upon which such works should be founded, viz. "L'étude des mœurs populaires, entreprise par un esprit pénétrant, et dirigée vers un but philosophique."* The "immondices" have for the most part vanished from our English penny literature. The host of penny Newgate novels, whether known as 'The Convict,' 'The Feast of Blood,' 'The Murder at the Old Jewry,' 'Claude Duval,' 'The Hangman's Daughter,' and so forth, may continue to be sold; but, as far as we can trace, there are no novelties in this once popular literature of the gallows. Abominations, called 'Mysteries' and 'Castles,' still lurk in dark corners; but the bulk of single Penny Novels, and the novels which "drag their slow length along" in penny journals, are marvellously changed. The most prudish regard to decency presides over every sentence and syllable. William the Conqueror has lost the brief ignoble title by which the old Saxons designated their oppressor, through a special interdict of the proprietor of one of these papers; and a lady of doubtful character must be mentioned by no more rugged name than that of a *belle amie*, which may be understood or not. But the "études des mœurs populaires," and the "but philoso-

* Frégier, 'Les Classes Dangereuses.'

phique," have not yet entered into the minds of the conductors of these elaborate works. Their scenes are invariably laid in the lord's palace or the right honourable's mansion; marriages are made at St. George's, Hanover Square, and the diamonds are bought at Storr and Mortimer's. If a young lady, who has the slight misfortune to be connected by the filial tie with a convicted felon, has a quarrel with her juvenile lover, she immediately rushes to the arms of an ancient baronet, who conducts her the next morning to the altar of his parish church. Boileau said of Mademoiselle Scudery, that she would never let her heroine get out of a house till she had taken an inventory of all the furniture. So, for the bewilderment of those who read these weekly novels by the one glimmering candle upon the deal table, their sick ladies recline in easy-chairs, "astral" lamps diffuse their rich glow upon crimson curtains, and aromatic perfumes fill the air from pastiles burning in miniature castles of gilded porcelain. The style of these productions is magficent: with golden zones on the summits of the mountains, and roseate tints edging the canopy of heaven; plants drooping with voluptuous languor, and shining insects skimming the air, as if borne on the wings of ardent passion. In all this we are speaking *au pied de la lettre*. Johnson described three sorts of unnatural style—the bombastic, the affected, and the weak. Most of these performances unite the three qualities, and are equally satis-

factory to the "love of imbecility," which Johnson thought was to be found in many. We have only seen one penny journal which places its incidents, and somewhat adapts its language, in consonance with the habits of the classes which these works seek to interest. In 'The Leisure Hour,' issued by the Religious Tract Society, we have an Australian story, with 'Sydney by Gaslight.' We are now amongst convicts, and hear drunken shouts come out from miserable huts. The success of this publication is considerable. Perhaps those who really understand such matters may say of the writer of these laudable attempts to imitate the homely style, something akin to what the great Pierce Egan said of a fashionable novelist twenty years ago—"Ah! he's very clever, but uncommon superficial in slang." Nevertheless, it is satisfactory to find that a mean has been sought, in the quarter where we might least have expected it, between the representations of humble and even of low life which are corrupting, and those pretended pictures of society which exhibit no life at all. In the number of 'The Leisure Hour' for February 16, 1854, there is a clever woodcut of a night auction at Sydney, which is as suggestive of a congregation of real vulgar sellers and bidders, with the necessary accompaniments of gin and tobacco, as might be connected with any of the exciting scenes of 'Life in London' at any period. The pictures of the penny sheets which the masses now greedily buy

are quite genteel. This is something to reflect upon. Some of the members of the Tract Society may think that "Chaos is come again." We do not. This sort of subject will be attractive to the better portion of male readers amongst the artisans, and especially amongst the very large number who belong to "temperance societies;" but for the girls, who devour the novels of the other penny journals, certainly not. Those who have been watching the workings of the penny literature are unanimous in their conviction that very few men read these mawkish and unnatural fictions. The readers for the most part belong, in point of cultivation, to the same class of females, who, half a century ago, gave up their whole leisure—if they did not neglect every domestic duty—for the ghosts and the elopements of 'The Minerva Press.' The intelligence of the readers is the same, however widened the attraction.

But, with all their bad taste, there is partial merit and manifest utility in some portions of the best of these penny journals. 'The Family Herald' has constantly a serious article of great good sense and shrewdness. This paper, and one or two others, have pages of "Answers to Correspondents," which, for the most part, contain useful information and judicious advice. Real young ladies often pour their doubts into the ear of this "Family" oracle, about love, and courtship, and marriage; and, as far as we can judge, receive very safe counsel. In the whole range of these things we can detect nothing

that bears a parallel with what used to be called "the blasphemous and seditious press." Neither, although these papers do not wholly abstain from comment upon what is passing in the world, can they be called newspapers. We see, however, that the new trump of war is calling up again one or two of the old class of unstamped violators of the law. In quiet times they cannot flourish. They may be difficult to suppress,

"'Now all the youth of England are on fire.'

CHAPTER VII.

Degrees of Readers — General Improvement — Newspaper Press — Newspaper Press National — Agricultural Readers — General desire for Amusement — Supply of real Knowledge.

OUR readers can scarcely have failed to make for themselves the deduction which naturally arises out of this survey of the progress of popular literature—that there always have been, still are, and always will be, various classes of readers and purchasers; and that the invariable progress of knowledge and intelligence—from the learned to the rich, from the rich to the middle classes, from the middle classes to the multitude—has produced as invariably a corresponding change in the number of books published, their quality, and their price. As the rich began to gather knowledge, books ceased to be wholly adapted to the learned or professional student; as the burgesses began to employ their leisure in reading, books ceased to be dependent upon courtly influence; as the multitude acquired the rudiments of instruction, books became less conventional, and began to adapt themselves to all classes. But it cannot, without a judicial blindness, be assumed that we are arrived at that state in which there are no degress of intellectual advancement. It is said, to use the language of the most popular journal of our day, that the masses "do not yet feel the assurance that, if they go in

thousands to the counters of the great publishing houses, as they congregate around the more plebeian shops, they will get the exact article they want, or what *they* consider value for their money." Here is the point. The masses, who are yet more imperfectly educated than some of their own class, and most of the class above them, would not consider, as they have never yet considered, solid and instructive reading "value for their money." Unquestionably "books to please the million must not only be good but attractive." The chief popular labour of the last quarter of a century has been to convert the ponderous ores of learning into the fine gold of knowledge. The multitude have been reached in many directions; and the influences of "good but attractive" books have penetrated where the books themselves have not yet had a direct influence. But the multitude stand precisely in the same relation to works of instruction, even the most attractive, as they do to Mechanics' Institutes and Athenæums. In Manchester and its dependencies, in 1851, there were 3447 members of these Institutions, and 1793 pupils in classes.* But the great mass of the youth of both sexes in Manchester were frequenting the Casinos. Here they neither drank, nor danced, nor gambled: they listened to recitations and comic songs at a penny an hour. They wanted mere amusement, and they found it. It is the same with the great bulk of the readers of cheap books. "It is most

* Hudson's 'Adult Education.'

worthy of note," says the writer just mentioned, whose anxiety for cheap literature we honour and appreciate, "that, when there has been no doubt of the substantial value of the commodity issued from the Row or Albemarle Street, the sale of the books has been by no means equivocal." Certainly not. Macaulay and Layard have found large numbers of purchasers, and will find them, in their cheap form. But are these purchasers what are called, in the same breath, "the multitude"—"the needy"? Not at all. Even the most successful of the periodical works above a penny—'Chambers' Journal,' 'Household Words,'—reach only the advanced guard of this class. Mr. Dickens collected around him at Birmingham such an audience as never before waited upon an author. He read his beautiful, humanizing 'Christmas Carol' to two thousand working-men. They felt every point—they laughed, or they grew serious, with understanding. But are we to suppose that the whole mass of the mechanical classes—men, women, and children—throughout the kingdom, would rush by millions to buy 'The Christmas Carol' at a penny or two—at a price that would compensate in fame what was wanting in profit? Its sterling merit—its nature, its simplicity, its purity, its quiet humour—require a far higher amount of taste and cultivation to appreciate than the immaturity of mind to which the coarseness and imbecility of the penny journals are acceptable. An author of less popular acceptation published a poem at a farthing, but we

never heard that he employed a steam-press in its production. The multitude have their own weekly literature, and we have seen what it is. Are the novels of the author of 'Pelham' to be speedily found in every cottage of the farm-labourer, and in every garret of the Lancashire cotton-spinner? The time may come, but it is not as yet. If a despotic government, in the desire to disseminate knowledge, were to follow the example which our free Government has set with regard to the 'School-books published by authority of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland,' they might produce sound popular literature as cheap again as the most adventurous of publishers. But if they left competition free to what they considered unsound knowledge—if they permitted the lowest-priced Fiction, however bad or indifferent, to circulate without their unequal competition—we believe the free-traders would beat the monopolists in point of numbers; and it would be found an easier task, even with every commercial disadvantage of price, to "tickle and excite the palate" than "strengthen the constitution."

Do such considerations as these make us hopeless of the steady progress of a sound as well as cheap popular literature? Decidedly no. There is improvement all around us. The halfpenny ballad of Seven Dials is not yet extinct; but let the collectors look sharply about them, for that relic of the chap-books, with the woodcuts that have served every generation, will soon be gone. In its

place has come the decent penny book of a hundred songs. The shades of Scott, and Moore, and Campbell will not quarrel with this new popularity. There are "flash" songs; but they are not for the penny buyers. Thackeray has described the dens in which these abominations are current. The whole aspect of the humbler press has changed within these few years. Unquestionably the people have changed. Visit, if you can, the interior of that marvellous human machine, the General Post-Office, on a Friday evening, from half-past five to six o'clock. Look with awe upon the tons of newspapers that are crowding in to be distributed through the habitable globe. Think silently how potent a power is this for good or for evil. You turn to one of the boxes of the letter-sorters, and your guide will tell you, "this work occupies not half the time it formerly did, for everybody writes better." General education furnishes the solution of the otherwise doubtful origin of the improvement, in all the more manifest characteristics of improvement, of all popular literature.

In 1801 the annual circulation of newspapers in England and Wales was 15 millions, and in Scotland 1 million. In 1853 the annual circulation of England and Wales was 72 millions, and of Scotland 8 millions, that of Ireland being also about 8 millions. In September, 1836, the stamp-duty on newspapers was reduced to one penny. Immediately previous to the reduction the annual circulation of newspapers in Great Britain was about 29 millions.

The increase, therefore, in seventeen years, has been 51 millions. We have cast up the twenty-two folio pages of the 'Return of the number of Newspaper Stamps, at one penny, issued in 1853,' and we find these results, as derived from the stamps, excluding supplements, used by 913 newspapers in England, 18 in Wales, 146 in Scotland, and 121 in Ireland, making a total number of 1198. But it must be borne in mind that about one-half of the publications in this return, called newspapers, are not newspapers in any sense of the word. Every publication can be stamped as a newspaper, for which the proprietor and printer give the necessary legal securities; and thus hundreds of price-currents, catalogues, and circulars—and many literary journals which are only partially stamped, and which none but political pedants, calling for a definition, term newspapers—find their way into this Official Return. There are, in round numbers, 600 newspapers proper in the United Kingdom. There are in London 14 daily papers, 6 twice and thrice a week, and 71 weekly; and about 500 provincial papers in the United Kingdom. Of the London Daily Papers, about 24 millions are annually circulated, of which the 'Times' has the lion's share of 14 millions. There are four weekly papers, published at the surpassingly cheap rate of threepence, which circulate 13 millions. The 'Illustrated London News' has a circulation of 4 millions; and eleven other leading weekly papers issue, annually, 6 millions. There

are 6 religious papers, which have a circulation of about a million and a quarter. Thus, 36 London publications engross 48 million stamps, out of 71 millions. Of the Provincial English Press there are 26 great towns which number 80 papers, and these 80 consume 13 millions of stamps. We have, therefore, only 10 millions more to distribute amongst the entire newspaper press of England. The Welsh annual circulation is under a million.

We have abstracted from the Official Return the number of stamps used annually by papers published in great cities and towns, especially the large marts of commerce and manufactures:—

Towns.	Number of separate papers.	Aggregate annual sale.
Birmingham	3	871,000
Bristol	4	596,075
Cambridge	2	216,500
Carlisle	2	263,500
Derby	4	249,700
Doncaster	2	178,500
Exeter	3	398,315
Hereford	2	278,000
Hull	2	347,000
Leeds	3	1,107,875
Leicester	4	240,500
Liverpool	8	1,702,588
Manchester	3	1,741,300
Newcastle	4	684,542
Norwich	3	419,950
Nottingham	3	324,000
Oxford	3	252,000
Plymouth	4	309,500
Preston	3	469,500
Sheffield	3	580,950
Stamford	1	571,826
Stafford	1	384,000
Carried forward	67	12,087,121

Brought forward	67	. .	12,087,121
Sunderland . . .	4	. .	191,142
Wolverhampton . .	3	. .	181,500
Worcester . . .	3	. .	320,052
York	3	. .	465,200
	80		13,245,015

The altered tone and ability of newspapers would open too wide a subject to be here dwelt upon in detail. One of the weekly threepenny papers has attained an enormous sale—a sale of 4½ millions annually—by discarding what was offensive to public morals, under the management of a man of letters who has a reputation to maintain. The Satirists and Paul Prys are gone. The extension of the mental labourers for newspapers, in proportion to the extension of the demand, has followed the same course as that of every other production of the press, from the days of the first printers. At the beginning of the present century the local newspapers "had no editorial comments whatever,"* and scarcely an original paragraph. The conductors of our 500 provincial journals are now watching for every particle of news in their own districts; reporting public meetings; waiting for electric telegraphs; pondering upon grave questions of social economy; and, to the best of their judgment, fairly representing the course of events. How much of this intelligent and honourable spirit they owe to the London Newspaper Press is not

* 'Life of Edward Baines;' a valuable record, by his son and successor, of an honest and able worker in building up the independence of the provincial press.

for us to decide. We believe the newspaper influence upon the people to be for good, because the Newspaper Press is National. A witness, giving evidence before the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps, 1851, said, "If the Committee were to look at 'The Weekly Dispatch' twenty years ago, its general character was very much worse than it is now. Then it was a so-called radical, almost a blasphemous, scurrilous, and contemptible paper, but with an enormous circulation. Now other papers have so much improved, that 'The Weekly Dispatch' has been compelled, in its own defence, very materially to change its tone." But what improved the "other papers," and compelled them to seek honest means of "an enormous circulation"? We answer—The advanced intelligence of the people. Books had begun their own work in the career of public enlightenment. Now, newspapers and books are working together for the same object. It is desired by some to make newspapers supersede books, by abolishing the stamp, and thus converting all popular literature into news. We have no faith in the process. An American told the Committee on Stamps that "the only knowledge which the working-classes would appreciate is contained in newspapers; they address themselves much more to politics than to science or literature." The witness had his own country in his mind, where the assertion is to some extent true. But in the American newspapers, almost universally, there is something more than "politics." All over

the Union the newspapers are filled, week by week, by the piracy of modern English literature, especially of English fiction. Whether the "working classes" read the politics, and neglect the literature, may be doubted. If politics are independent of science and literature, the study is worth little. It is degrading. We doubt if this disposition, carried to excess, will make a wise people, or a happy people. The opinion of an American is worth little upon such a question in England. There is no parallel in the condition of the people of the United States. The geographical position, and the separate constitutions of individual states, necessarily demand many newspapers. Thus the newspapers of the United States, even with their large circulation, are essentially local. The English papers, we repeat, are national. The papers of the capital are the papers of the empire. They chiefly, with their wonderful organization, supply the material for the twenty-seven millions of these islands, and the other millions of our race spread over the habitable globe in our colonies, to learn, to consider, to know their rights, to perform their duties. Could this unequalled instrument of knowledge be kept efficiently at work, while every petty printer of every parish was ready to make a venture for a thousand penny subscribers to his Argus or his Luminary, without incurring any of the prodigious cost of a London daily morning paper? If the time should come when the land should be filled with penny newspapers,

it would be the same with newspapers as it is now with the weekly unstamped sheets. Quantity, not quality, would be the criterion of excellence. The lower grade of literary labourers would be multiplied tenfold. Unscrupulous employers would rise up on every side, who would go for the "immondices" if decency failed; and for disorder if tranquillity were growing unprofitable. The rich would be set against the poor, and the poor against the rich. Those who now organise strikes by their eloquence would work more effectually with their pen; and employers would not be without their organs to defend harshness and oppression. Sects would denounce each other in weekly journals, to be sold by the pew-opener; and the Snoreum Vestry would enter upon a wordy war with their neighbours of Muggleton. Let us "study to be quiet."

It is proposed to establish penny newspapers for the especial benefit of the agricultural labourers. How are they to be circulated? If postage is to be paid in addition to the price, there is little gained over the present system; for there are published, weekly, about 300,000 newspapers at 3*d*. If they do not go by post, how are they to reach the scattered hamlets? This is really the difficulty, with regard to all periodical literature, in raising up agricultural labourers into a population of readers. It is satisfactory to know that the keys to knowledge—the power of reading and writing—are being as freely imparted to the rural population as

to those of towns. There is progress. In 1841 the proportion, to all marriages, of those who signed the marriage-register with marks, was—men, 33 per cent.; women, 49 per cent. In 1853 the proportion was—men, 30 per cent.; women, 45 per cent. In 1863 the effect of the education of the last ten years will be tested upon the same principle. But it is to be noted, in the Registrar-General's Returns for 1853, that in the Agricultural South-Eastern Division, as well as in other agricultural districts, there was slight difference in the proportion between males and females; while in the North-Western Manufacturing Division the number of females who could not write was nearly double that of the males. In the South-Eastern Division, comprising the rural parts of Surrey and Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, and Berkshire, in the cases of 11,537 marriages, 3457 men and 3749 women signed with marks. In the North-Western Division, comprising Cheshire and Lancashire, in the cases of 24,877 marriages, 8729 men and 15,443 women signed with marks. There cannot be a greater proof of the influence of a resident clergy, looking diligently to National Schools, and perhaps stimulated by the zeal of dissent in the same useful direction, than this fact. It makes us hopeful of the eventual advance of the rural population to the condition of a reading people. But the question always arises—What are they to read? What will they read? Is the edge of the cup not only to be honeyed, but is the whole cup to be

filled with sweets? How are we to find the mean between what is dry and what is useless—what is plain and what is childish? A witness of well-known intelligence told the Committee on Newspaper Stamps that in his village he tried the experiment of reading 'The Times' to an evening-class of adult labourers, and that he could not read twenty lines without feeling that there were twenty words in it which none of his auditors understood. He wanted, therefore, cheap newspapers, that would be so written as not to puzzle the hearers or readers by such words as "operations," "channel," or "fleet." For ourselves, we would rather endure as much book-ignorance as we endured in the first quarter of this century, than believe that knowledge might be promoted by writing down to the intelligence of the least instructed class; and that they could be raised up into enlightenment upon this plan of Mr. Hickson, to have newspapers that would reach their minds like "school-primers, containing words of one or two syllables." Such partial enlightenment would be general degradation.

Upon looking around upon all the various phases of Cheap Literature which now present themselves in these kingdoms, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that, in proportion as the number of readers has increased, the desire of the mass of the population has been rather for passing amusement than solid instruction. There is one very obvious reason for this. The people of this country work harder

than any other people, not only from the absolute necessity of the competition around them, but through the energy of their race. It cannot, therefore, in the nature of things, be expected that much of the reading of all classes should be other than for amusement. Further, when we consider how recent has been the training for any reading amongst a large proportion of those who have become readers, we can scarcely look for a great amount of serious application in their short leisure after a hard working-day. The entertainment which is now presented to all, whether it be in the shape of a shilling novel or a penny journal, is not debasing; it may enfeeble the intellect, but it does not taint it. How are we to deal with this universal desire for amusement? Not, we think, by any direct efforts at its counteraction, either by individuals or societies. We have before us three volumes, just completed, of a most excellent penny weekly publication of 'The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,' entitled 'The Home Friend.' It is cheap, even by comparison with the cheapest of the class. It consists of twenty-four octavo pages, and is excellently printed on superior paper. The old patronising style of such works is given up. It deals with grave subjects in an agreeable spirit. In the preface to the first volume, the editor rejoices that the Society is enabled to publish a work attainable by "the tenant of the lowliest cottage, which a century ago could only be purchased by the opulent few." But it is not a

matter of congratulation that this work, like others professing the same aims, has not had any great success, from the absolute want of buyers. It was thought that the members of the Society could have commanded a great weekly circulation amongst their neighbours. The average sale never went beyond 12,000. What, then, is to be the course of the real friends of popular instruction? We think it is, to let the existing cheap literature purify itself. We have got beyond the scurrilous stage—the indecent stage—the profane stage—the seditious stage. Let us hope that the frivolous stage, in which we are now to some extent abiding, will in time pass on to a higher taste, and a sounder mental discipline. "Confidence," said Chatham, "is a plant of slow growth." So is taste; so is a love of knowledge for its own sake. Let us make real instruction as attractive as we can; but let us have no compromises under the pretence of gilding the pill. Study is study, and amusement is amusement. Let the people learn, and learn they will, in time; but let us abandon all the old, childish attempts of cheating them into learning. The circle of those who are attaining sound knowledge is steadily widening. Already, as the circle has widened, the means of acquiring information have been offered to "the masses," and even to "the needy," at a rate of cheapness quite unequalled by any previous attempts to make sound knowledge popular. We now especially allude to 'The Penny Cyclopædia'—a work of which the literature and

engravings alone cost the publisher, as he has recorded, the large sum of 42,000*l.* Those who affect to believe that nothing has been done for the cheapening of books, should recollect that, before the existence of this Cyclopædia, no great work of reference of this nature could be obtained under 40*l.* But 'The Penny Cyclopædia,' large as was its sale, was not profitable; it involved an enormous loss. The writer, in his 'Struggles of a Book,' has stated that the paper-duty operated as a burthen upon 'The Penny Cyclopædia' to the extent of 32,000*l.* He adds,—"Had that sum of 32,000*l.* been actually saved to me, I should not have been a pound richer by the publication of 'The Penny Cyclopædia.' But with the saving I should not have been to that amount poorer." Compared with the vast outlay, 'The Penny Cyclopædia' was set at too low a price for the probable demand. The class of buyers for instruction was not large enough to carry off 40,000 copies, which would have yielded adequate profit. The very word "Penny" was then repulsive, and implied something low, as apprehended by the rich vulgar. Moreover, the book occupied eleven years in its issue, and its sale fell from 50,000 at the beginning to less than 20,000 in the end. No work that occupied more than four or five years in its completion was ever successful in this country. In the publication of 'The English Cyclopædia,' which is founded upon 'The Penny Cyclopædia,' a more prudent course has

been adopted. The new book is issued in four divisions, which will form four separate Cyclopædias of Geography, Natural History, Sciences, and Biography, each of which will be completed in little more than two years from its commencement. Comparing the two books — 'The Penny' and 'The English' — we can readily see the vast augmentations of knowledge during twenty years that render the complete re-modelling of such a work absolutely necessary. In every branch of exact knowledge this re-modelling has become indispensable; and upon other works of instruction many earnest labourers are so engaged. Publishers cannot now afford to let their books, especially their educational books, remain without improvement. It is thus that, in spite of the tendency to light reading, the supply of real knowledge is kept up. Those who find an ally of knowledge in the purer and more ennobling fiction, such as our literature, past and present, abundantly supplies, are gradually brought into the extending circle of earnest readers. The great region beyond is still little cultivated; but even there the subsoil-plough has been at work, and there is some grain amidst the weeds. The weeds cannot be rooted out by any sudden husbandry.

CHAPTER VIII.

Free Libraries — In Towns — In Rural Districts — Influences of the best Books.

IT is difficult to point out a direct practical remedy for much that is injurious in our cheapest popular literature; and especially any remedy that could be supplied by the State. We cannot cure folly by enactments, however we may try to repress crime. "These things will be, and must be; but how they shall be least hurtful, how least enticing, herein consists the grave and governing wisdom of a State. To sequester out of the world into Atlantic and Utopian policies, which never can be drawn into use, will not mend our condition, but to ordain wisely as in this world of evil, in the midst whereof God hath placed us unavoidably."

This noble sentence, from Milton's 'Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing,' suggests some remarks which, however painful to utter, no one who thinks honestly upon the subject of popular enlightenment can disguise. There is NO "grave and governing wisdom" in the English State—there is NO desire "to ordain wisely"—in any matter connected with the educational advancement of the people. The greatest discouragement in the first stage,—the most niggardly support in the second,—have been given to the education of the

young. With the exception of Schools of Design, which, however useful, have a very limited object, the education of the adult has been retarded by every possible legislative effort, direct or indirect. In 1849 a Select Committee of the House of Commons, to inquire into "the best means of extending the establishment of libraries, freely open to the public, especially in large towns, in Great Britain and Ireland," came to the unanimous resolution that "our present inferior position is unworthy of the power, the liberality, and the literature of the country." An Act had been passed in 1845, by which Town Councils, in Municipal Boroughs having 10,000 inhabitants and upwards, in England and Wales, were empowered to establish *Museums* at their own discretion. In 1850, seconding the Report of the Committee of 1849, a Bill was brought in "for enabling Town Councils to establish *Public Libraries* and Museums," in towns of the like large population. The proposal was damaged by the device of requiring that a poll of the burgesses should first have been duly taken on the question, and that a rate of one halfpenny in the pound should be the maximum to be levied by a majority of votes. The consequence was obvious. Those of the rate-payers who had the low shop-keeping jealousy of extending knowledge to those they presumed to call beneath them, rejected the proposition for establishing Free Libraries at Birmingham and at Exeter. In the mean time the difficulties have been surmounted in four great Lanca-

shire towns, Manchester, Liverpool, Salford, Bolton, where 50,000*l.* have been raised, chiefly by voluntary subscription, for Free Libraries and Museums; and 60,000 volumes have been purchased for the open and unrestricted use, in the libraries and at home, of every member of the community, from the highest to the humblest. The experiment has been completely successful. One of the most satisfactory results has been that, amidst the hardest worked population in the world—those who come from their factories with the honourable stain of labour on their hands and brows—the most exemplary care has been taken of the books borrowed. If Free Libraries are good for the greatest marts of industry, are they not good for the smaller? Mr. Ewart, the unwearied mover in this object, brings in a Bill in the Session of 1854, to extend the Act of 1850 to towns of less population and to the metropolitan boroughs; and, further, to remedy a great defect in the former Bill, that the money raised by the halfpenny rate might be applied to purchase books as well as to provide buildings. On the 5th of April the House of Commons throws out this Bill, under the most frivolous pretexts; the real object being to truckle to the prejudices of those who in all times have systematically opposed the progress of knowledge, when there is a chance of extending it to *the people* universally.

> "Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
> England hath need of thee."

It is in connexion with all we have said in the

preceding pages, about the character and tendency of cheap popular literature, that we have looked forward with hope to the general establishment of Free Libraries in town and country. Mechanics' Institutes, and Literary and Scientific Institutions, valuable as they have been, do not embrace the class for which they were originally intended. According to returns prepared by Dr. Hudson, Secretary of the Manchester Athenæum, in 1851, there were 720 such institutions, with 120,000 members, and they possessed 815,000 volumes of books. But the same zealous person honestly tells us that the majority of Literary Institutions comprise professional men, the higher shopkeepers, and the managers of large firms; that the clerk and the shopman will not go where they have a chance of being looked coldly on by their employers or superiors in service, and resort to Mechanics' Institutes, where their presence effectually drives out the fustian jackets. To remedy this was one of the especial objects of Free Libraries, where books should be liberally provided for *all*, whether for reference or home reading. A large majority of the borrowers of books from the Manchester Free Library belong to the operative class. Is it not of some importance that the warehousemen, packers, artisans, machinists, mill-hands male and female, assistants in shops male and female, dressmakers,—should have access to the standard works of English literature, and the current books of the modern press? Is there no great beneficial effect

to be produced by the 77,232 volumes that in the first year were issued from the same Manchester Free Library, comprising—in theology, 1130; philosophy, 845; history, 22,837; law, politics, and commerce, 839; sciences and arts, 4319; and general literature, including poetry, fiction, essays, and periodicals, 47,262? Is it of no importance that, in the same period, 61,080 volumes have been used in the reference department? How long are those who are apt to think that

"The wealthiest man among us is the best,"

to influence the better thoughts, and control the higher impulses, of those who have no vain fears that knowledge, however widely extended, may produce evil to society? The object of the general diffusion of knowledge is not to render men discontented with their lot—to make the peasant yearn to become an artisan, or the artisan dream of the honours and riches of a profession—but to give the means of content to those who, for the most part, must necessarily remain in that station which requires great self-denial and great endurance; but which is capable of becoming not only a condition of comfort, but of enjoyment, through the exercise of these very virtues, in connexion with a desire for that improvement of the understanding which, to a large extent, is independent of rank and riches. It is a most fortunate circumstance, and one which seems especially ordained by Him who wills the happiness of his creatures,

that the highest, and the purest, and the most lasting sources of enjoyment are the most accessible to all. The great distinction that has hitherto prevailed in the world is this,—that those who have the command of riches and of leisure have alone been able, in any considerable degree, to cultivate the tastes that open these common sources of enjoyment. The first desire of every man is, no doubt, to secure a sufficiency for the supply of the physical necessities of our nature; but in the equal dispensations of Providence it is not any especial portion of the condition even of the humblest among us who labours with his hands to earn his daily bread, that his mind should be shut out from the gratifications which belong to the exercise of our observing and reflecting faculties. View the agricultural labourer as we have been too long accustomed to see him—a rude untutored hind. His most ordinary occupations place him amongst scenes highly favourable to the cultivation of some of the purest and most peaceful thoughts. The general introduction of agricultural machinery and agricultural chemistry has an inevitable tendency to demand a race of skilled labourers, instead of unintellectual serfs. But how do we deal with the labourer and his family? We educate the boys and girls up to a certain point; we give them the rudiments of knowledge; we are now asked to go further, and to teach them "common things," by which we understand, chiefly, the practical applications of science. But, once off the school-form, the rural

boy is to find his evening amusement in the beer-shop, and the girl to make her way to the next town, in search of some gaiety that ends fatally. Home has no charms for these. Books might be some attraction, but how are they to be got? There are books which well-meaning people will lend—but they are for the most part of an exclusively serious character. None of the fair features of knowledge are presented to them; no "perpetual feast of nectared sweets." They are offered the Sunday sermon without the Sunday holiday. It is clear that this system will not do; and the most sensible in the country have abandoned it. We have before us a catalogue of the 'Windsor Park Library, under the patronage of His Royal Highness the Ranger.' This Park Library, established by Prince Albert, is for the use of all those in the local employ of the Crown. These comprise a population of about 300, of which 100 are subscribers to this library, at sixpence a quarter. It is self-governed, with the assistance of the curate of the Park, who has the right of approval of the books given or purchased. Here is an agricultural population of a mixed character—keepers, bailiffs, woodmen, ploughmen, and field and forest lads. This hard-working and comfortable population is not crammed with "harsh and crabbed" knowledge. There are good books in the library—divinity, history, biography, natural history—but there is abundance of poetry and fiction. The result is that the library is most popular; that it has a visible influence

on the families of the subscribers; that the population thus intellectually raised, in the power of happily employing their small leisure, are a contented home-keeping population. There are, no doubt, peculiar advantages in their position; but the intelligence which is thus cultivated amongst their dependants by the highest in the land would ultimately raise every rural population, if the obvious means were not too commonly neglected.

We have spoken strongly about the indifference of the State to the establishment of Free Libraries in populous towns. But even those who have most strenuously urged this measure have said nothing about such institutions in rural districts. We ask, why not? The necessity is as great, perhaps greater. A ready access to instructive books, and amusing books, is the desire which most naturally suggests itself to the young people who have left the schools which the State recognizes, however imperfectly. The desire cannot be gratified except through some occasional benevolence. Thus the neglected mind first grows listless—then corrupt. Dangerous excitement begins the career which ends in habitual degradation. There could be nothing easier that to make the National School a Free Library also. The room is vacant after the hours of work; the schoolmaster is the ready librarian. It would be the truest economy in parishes to provide such Free Libraries out of the ordinary rates, if Parliament were to give them an enabling power. Gratuitous vac-

cination, preventive measures against contagion, are cheerfully paid for. Why not a payment of the most limited amount—a farthing on each pound of rental—to keep the people sober, to render them domestic, to raise them gradually but surely to the capacity of discharging those labours with skill which have been formerly intrusted to mere animal power? It would be well, we think, to make the experiment.

In thus advocating the general establishment of Free Libraries, we believe that we are pointing out the only practicable course for counteracting the tendencies of *cheap periodical literature*. The principle which is now carried, as we have endeavoured to show, to a dangerous and ridiculous excess, is to give the greatest possible quantity at the lowest possible price. The principle is destructive to the employment of the highest class of literary labour. It involves the natural mediocrity or positive baseness of that quality which is not visible on the surface. The counteracting principle is to make the best *books* accessible to all; and not to imagine that the evil is not counteracted if those who have access to the best books prefer the entertaining to the severe. One of the most eminent cultivators of the highest knowledge, Sir John Herschel, has told us a great truth in this matter, which ought never to be forgotten. Defending what he calls "the invaluable habit of resorting to books for pleasure," as the main desire of those who "have grown up in a want of instruc-

tion, and in a carelessness of their own improvement," he says—"If we would generate a taste for reading, we must, as our only chance of success, begin by pleasing. * * * In the *higher and better class* of works of fiction and imagination, duly circulated, you possess all you require to strike your grappling-iron into their souls, and chain them, willing followers, to the car of advancing civilization."

We have said that cheap literature has got beyond its scurrilous, indecent, profane, and seditious stages. Six years ago it exhibited every one of these qualities. We think it will not return to them. But there is an element of danger which, if not so revolting, is far more formidable. It is that element which has for its materials the disputes between labour and capital. There is ignorance on both sides of this question. There is indifference on the part of the State. A period of great and increasing commercial prosperity has softened down many of the coarser and fiercer aspects of these disputes; but in no case have they been reduced to an intelligible philosophy on the part of employers or of workmen. Let the prosperity of trade be interrupted by war; let our markets be narrowed; let profits necessarily fall, and wages with them; and what lessons, we may ask, have been acquired of mutual dependence and mutual interests, of conciliation and of brotherhood, in the season which was favourable to instruction? Political economy has been too long taught in a one-

sided spirit; but, nevertheless, its great truths remain unaltered. Are the people unwilling to search them out? Practically, are they reluctant to apply them? They know, right well, that profits and wages are distinct matters; that one belongs to capital and the other to labour; that if they are to have both they must become capitalists. They try, upon the smallest, and therefore the most hazardous scale, to unite labour and capital by co-operation. They cannot try the principle upon a larger scale, through the evil agency of our laws of partnership. The Legislature inquires into the matter, and there leaves it. The Legislature complains that strikes are ruinous to all concerned, and does nothing to bring about that union—a union of feelings as well as interests—which would destroy strikes. The Legislature says that the people have no economical or historical knowledge, and forbids Free Libraries. Sixty years ago, Burke calculated that there were eighty thousand *readers* in this country. If Burke had lived in times when there are fourteen hundred thousand buyers of cheap weekly sheets, whose readers probably amount to five millions, would his great philosophical mind have said, as modern legislation says, Do whatever you can to prevent this reading going in a right direction; you cannot stop reading, but you can keep the cheap literature debased, by denying the people access to the great original thinkers who would lift them out of their intellectual [illegible] into a brighter day? Would Edmund

Burke have given such counsel? Would he have shrunk from admitting the people to the safe and enduring equality of a participation in the common property of mind? He would have said, as he said in 1770—"All the solemn plausibilities of the world have lost their reverence and effect." He would now have added—Build your future authority and your respect, not upon ignorance, but upon knowledge.

For the proper supply of such Free Libraries, we have a new class of Books rising fast into importance—Books of established value, carefully edited—the Poets, the Historians, the Critical and Philosophical Writers. The great Divines will not be neglected in this good work. There cannot be cheaper books of this class than Mr. Murray's 'British Classics,' than Mr. Bohn's various series, than several Collections of the Poets now in course of publication. We rejoice to see *well-printed* books for the Library appear at half the old prices; and to know that there is some chance of the eyes of a generation not prematurely perishing under the inflictions of a typography inferior to the ordinary newspaper. Free Libraries would create a large and certain demand for such works. With the majority, the fame of our great writers is little more than the scrolls upon their tombs. Let our glorious Literature no longer be, for the People,

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